

THE  
FAMILY CHAPLAIN:

BEING A COMPLETE  
COURSE OF SERMONS  
UPON THE  
FESTIVALS AND FASTS  
(THROUGHOUT THE YEAR)

AS PRESCRIBED IN  
THE BOOK OF COMMON-PRAYER.

SELECTED FROM  
THE CELEBRATED DISCOURSES  
OF

ABP. TILLOTSON,	DR. LITTLETON,
ABP. SECKER,	DR. HOLE,
BP. STILLINGFLEET,	DR. WATERLAND,
BP. ATTERBURY,	DR. CLARKE,
BP. CONYBEARE,	DR. FOTHERGILL,
BP. WARBURTON,	DR. BROWN,
DR. SWIFT,	AND OTHERS.

The whole intended to explain and vindicate the CHRISTIAN  
FAITH; to promote and perfect the pious Design of

MR. NELSON

IN HIS

COMPANION FOR THE FESTIVALS AND FASTS  
OF THE CHURCH;

And to render an acceptable Service to the CLERGY, by the  
Supply of so desirable a Collection.

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## On the Ascension of our Lord ; or Holy Thursday.

By Dr. SAMUEL CLARKE of St. James's.

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HEBREWS, Chap. viii. Ver. 1.

*Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: we have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.*

**I**N the foregoing chapter, the Apostle sets forth at large, the excellency of our Saviour's perpetual and unchangeable priesthood: by comparing it with that mutable and successive one among the Jews, Ver. 23. *They truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. Who needeth not daily, as those High Priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; but has, by one offering of himself, for ever perfected them that are sanctified. The full explication of this doctrine, and of the consequences of it, is the subject of this whole epistle: and a brief summary of it is given us in the words of the text; now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: we have*

*such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.*

Our Lord, after his resurrection, as we find it recorded in the Gospels and in the history of the Acts, *shewed himself alive to his Disciples by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God; conversing with them familiarly, opening their understandings, expounding to them the Scriptures, explaining to them in all the Prophets the things concerning himself, directing them in what manner they should preach the Gospel to all nations, and promising to be with them by the assistance of his spirit even unto the end of the world.* By which means when they were fully instructed for the execution of their office, he departed from them, ascending visibly into heaven, in such a manner as is described by St. Paul under the prophetic words of the psalmist, *when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men: now — he that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.* From thenceforth therefore, we have (as the text expresses it) *such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.*

The word heaven, when applied to the omnipresent God, as in that expression of Solomon, *God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few; and in that compellation wherewith our Lord begins his prayer, Our Father which art in heaven; the word, heaven, I say, when thus applied to God does not signify literally a particular place, in point of situation;*

but



but figuratively, a state of highest dignity and supreme dominion. For God, being essentially present every where, cannot be really and literally in one place more than in another. But he can make particular manifestations of his glory, when and where and how he pleases: and where he does this in the most conspicuous manner, that place is called, by way of eminence, his habitation, his throne, his presence. Now because the heavens are higher than the earth; because thence are derived all beneficial influences, upon this lower world; because there is the habitation of angels, attending upon the commands of God; therefore God, who is really and essentially present every where alike, yet with regard to the exercise of his power and the manifestation of his glory, is to us represented as being particularly in heaven. And thither therefore did our Lord Jesus Christ accordingly ascend, to the highest place of glory and dignity, to the most immediate presence of the majesty of God, to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God; and sat down (as the text with great elegance expresses it) *on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.*

This phrase, the majesty, used thus absolutely and indefinitely, without mentioning the person to whom it belongs; is, in a very sublime and emphatical manner, expressive of the super-eminent glory and majesty of God. It sets forth to us in such a sense, the singular and transcendent glory of the Divine Majesty; as that comparatively speaking, there is no other Majesty but his. Thus, in other places of Scripture, when God is stiled absolutely and by way of eminence, *the holy one; the blessed,* (as Mark



xiv. 61. *Art thou the Christ, the son of the blessed?*) *the power*, (as in the verse next following, *ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power*;) *the excellent glory*, (as 2 Pet. i. 17. *There came such a voice to him from the excellent glory*;) the sense of these expressions is, that, comparatively speaking, there is none holy, none blessed, none powerful, none glorious, but he alone. Good men are in Scripture frequently stiled holy; and angels are the *holy angels of God*; and yet of him and to him alone it is said, *thou only art holy*. Angels and the souls of men are immortal; and yet of him it is in a most just sense affirmed, that he only hath immortality. Others have wisdom ascribed to them in their degree and order, and yet he nevertheless is God only wise. Others are, in their rank and proportion, truly and justly called good; and yet our Lord, with peculiar emphasis and high propriety, declares, there is none good, but one, that is God. The scripture, without any scruple, calls temporal deliverers, Saviours\*. And our Lord Jesus Christ, in the spiritual and infinitely higher sense, is, by way of eminence, stiled our Saviour: and yet the Father Almighty, (who in St. Paul's language, Tit. iii. 4, 5. is God our Saviour which *saves us through Jesus Christ our Saviour*,) declares concerning himself, *beside me, there is no Saviour*†. The manner of speaking is very just, as well as lofty and sublime; and it is useful and proper, in order to keep up in men's minds a due and awful sense of the supreme and unapproachable greatness of God. Others have power ascribed to them, and dominion and majesty;

\* Nehem. ix. 27.

† Isaiah xliii. 11.

majesty ; there are, as St. Paul tells us, *Gods many, and Lords many, in heaven and in earth* \*. Some falsely so called ; others rightly, in such a sense as the Scripture gives the title of Gods and Lords to angels and to men : yet, for all that, there is still really no other God but one : and the Majesty, absolutely speaking, is his alone. Our High Priest is *set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*.

The term, *right hand*, when applied to God, is not to be understood literally, as denoting a particular situation with regard to place, (for God has no hands, no shape or parts ; ) but it signifies figuratively a state of high dignity, dominion and power, next and immediately after God the Father himself. Our Saviour's being advanced to the right hand of God, is his being actually invested with that glory and dignity, for the joy of which, when it was set before him, he willingly *endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God* † ; that is, has overcome death, and entered into his kingdom of glory. And therefore, in other places of Scripture, the very same notion is set forth under the parallel expressions, that *him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and Saviour ; to be Lord both of the dead and living : to be the head of all principality and power, the head over all things to the church : that he hath given him all power both in heaven and earth, and put all things in subjection under his feet ; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him : that he has appointed him heir of all things, and according to the working of his mighty power, has set*

B 3

him

\* 1 Cor. viii. 5.

† Heb. xii. 2.



*him far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. All which exalted characters are emphatically included in this one figurative expression; the right hand of God, the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.*

Lastly, the word, *sitting*, or *being set*, is likewise to be understood, not literally as denoting a particular corporeal posture; (for in other places of Scripture it is expressed that our Lord is at the right hand of God, or that he stands at the right hand of God;) but the word, *sitting*, is for this reason more frequently used in the case before us, because it implies, in its figurative use and signification, fullness of possession, and perpetuity of retaining the glory possessed. *After he had offered one sacrifice for sins, he for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting, till his enemies be made his foot-stool; for by one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified* \*. From the time of our Lord's ascending into heaven, till his second coming to judgement, there were many ages to pass over: and therefore St. Peter in his sermon to the Jews, tells them, that *when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, he shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto them; whom the heaven must receive, until the times of restitution of all things* †.

The

\* Heb. x. 12.

† Acts iii. 19.



The office which our Saviour executes during this his continuance in heaven, is signified to us in the text under the character of High Priest : *We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of — the Majesty in the heavens.* And the explication of the nature of this office, as applied to our Lord, is the principal subject of this whole epistle. Upon which account, the words of the text are thus introduced by the Apostle : *Of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum ; we have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.* As, among the Jews, the High Priest in the temple entered once a year into the holy place, with the blood of others, so Christ having once in the end of the world put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, it was necessary that he with his own blood should enter once likewise into the holy place, into that within the veil, having obtained eternal redemption for us ; that is, it was necessary that he should ascend into heaven, to finish and present his most acceptable oblation before God, for the propitiation of the sins of the world. For so the Apostle interprets it : *Christ (says he) is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are only the figures of the true ; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.*

The first and immediate effect of this appearing in the presence of God for us, was the mission of the Holy Ghost. Before our Saviour's exaltation, the Holy Ghost, says the evangelist, (speaking comparatively,) *was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified* \*. And our

B 4

Lord

\* John vii. 39.

Lord himself: *I tell you the truth*, says he; *it is expedient for you, that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you; and—he will guide you into all truth.* Accordingly, at the Pentecost after Christ's ascension, the Holy Ghost fell upon the Apostles in a singular and most miraculous manner, beyond the examples of former inspirations. And by the continual assistance and ordinary operations of the same Spirit has our Lord promised to *be with us* his true disciples, to *be in the midst of them wherever two or three are gathered together in his name*, even unto the end of the world.

But further: the Scripture represents this our great High Priest, as continually interceding for us at the right hand of God, from the time of his ascension till his final coming to judgment. *We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins:* For our sins; that is, for the sins of all those who truly repent and effectually amend their lives, according to the gracious terms of the Gospel; and who are therefore accordingly represented as having *washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* For persons of this disposition, our Saviour is a perpetual and effectual advocate, to obtain perfect forgiveness of their past sins, and to cleanse them by the perpetual assistance of his Spirit, from all unrighteousness. They have an High Priest, not who cannot be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, *but who was himself tempted in all points like as they are, yet without sin.* And he is able also, as well as willing, to  
save



*save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them* \*. And because he thus lives for ever, and has an unchangeable priesthood, therefore he is said in Scripture to be a priest, not after the order of Aaron, which was a perpetual succession of priests, not suffered to continue by reason of death ; but after the order of Melchisedec, who was both prince and high priest, and of whom is recorded neither predecessor nor successor, that he might be a type and emblem of him *who ever liveth to make intercession for us*.

Some unbelievers there have been in all ages, and still are, who, in opposition to this great doctrine of Christianity, allege, that God being always omnipresent and ready to hear the prayers which every one offers for himself, therefore there was no need of appointing a mediator; and that God always acting in his own nature, according to the exact right and reason of the case, therefore he cannot be changed, or have any affection moved, by the interposition of any intercessor whatsoever. But in this matter they greatly mistake. For if God's being himself every where present, were a sufficient reason why no mediator should be appointed to intercede for men; it would by the same argument be also a sufficient reason, why men should neither pray nor intercede for themselves: for God knows their wants as perfectly, even without their ever praying for themselves, as without a mediator interceding for them. If therefore, notwithstanding God's omnipresence and omniscience, it be still reasonable to require that men should pray for themselves; in order to keep up in their minds a

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\* Heb. vii. 25.



constant sense of God, and that they may make continual acknowledgement of their dependence upon him : it may in like manner be very reasonable, in order to keep up in their minds a just sense of their own unworthiness, and of the true demerit of sin, to require of them, that through such a mediator only, as he has thought fit to appoint, should they have access to *him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*. And though it be indeed very true, that by no intercession whatsoever, can God ever be moved to act otherwise than is agreeable to perfect right and reason ; yet in cases of mercy and compassion, where the whole of what he does, proceeds from mere free bounty ; it is evident he may convey those his free gifts, in what manner, and upon what terms or conditions, and through what instruments he pleases ; and may require their being accepted in that particular method, or not at all. For however otherwise it be in all such cases where there is any claim of justice, or demand of right ; yet undoubtedly, in dispensations of mere mercy, that which is true of every owner even among frail and mortal men, may with much greater propriety be said of God ; shall he not do what and how he will, with his own ?

That which remains, is, to draw two or three practical inferences from the whole of what has been said.

And 1<sup>st</sup>, From the doctrine of our Lord's sitting at the right hand of God to intercede continually for us, and to govern his church by the mission of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, the Apostle's inference is very natural, *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,*  
*that*

that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need\*. Again ch. x. 19. Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (i. e. having access to God through him,) by a new and living way which he has consecrated for us; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. For he that spared not his own Son †, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?—Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

2dly, If we follow the example of our Lord's humility and righteousness here upon earth, we may hope through him to be made partakers also of his exaltation in heaven. I go, says he, to prepare a place for you, and—I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. Again: To him that overcometh, (that is, who perseveres in resisting the temptations of sin;) unto him will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. These promises caused St. Paul so to express himself, as if God had already raised us up together with Christ, and made us already sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus ‡. The manner of expression is highly figurative; but the literal and proper sense of it is what he elsewhere thus explains: *We have hope*, says he, *as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither our fore-runner is entered for us.* And if we have this hope in us, then ought we accordingly to set our affections on things above,  
not

\* Heb. iv. 16.

† Rom. viii. 32.

‡ Eph. ii. 6.



*not on things in the earth; that where our treasure is, there may our heart be also; that we may seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and where our life is hid, (that is, deposited, laid up for us in the determinations of the divine good pleasure, it is hid) with Christ in God: that our conversation (the thoughts of our home and final abode,) may be in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who, at his coming, shall so change us, that we shall become like him, when we shall see him as he is; and as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. By employing our meditations in this manner, upon our Lord's state of exaltation in heaven; so as to make it a continual motive to us, to prepare ourselves to become finally partakers of that promised inheritance; we shall contribute what in us lies, toward fulfilling that prophecy which he spake before his death, And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me\*.*

3dly, Another proper and most important use of the doctrine before us, is as follows. If our Lord came down upon earth, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; and if, in his state of exaltation in heaven, the design of his continual intercession with God, and of his whole government of the church by his Spirit, be still always one and the same, even the putting away of sin: then from hence we may learn how great and fatal a corruption it is of Christian Religion, for men who live wickedly, in a course of debauchery, or in the habitual practice of any known

\* John xii. 32.



known sin whatsoever, to expect to obtain salvation by relying presumptuously upon the merits of Christ, or upon his intercession, instead of obeying his commands delivered in the Gospel. *The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, was shed not to render men safe in unrighteous living, but to purge the conscience of such as truly repent and amend, to purge them from dead works to serve the living God\*.* The end why our Lord gave himself for us, being, *that he might purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* If this great end be attained; if (according to the language of St. John) *we walk in the light, (that is, in the practice of true virtue and holiness,) even as God is light, and in him is no darkness at all;* then indeed *the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all (past) sin.* But *if we have fellowship with him, and (still) walk in darkness;* (that is, continue to live wickedly, and yet hope for benefit from the profession of God's true religion from what Christ has either done or suffered for us;) *we lie and do not the truth †.*

4thly, and lastly, As from what has been said, appears the reasonableness of men's applying to God through that one Mediator, whom he has appointed; so at the same time appears likewise the folly of their setting up other mediators, of their own invention; such as are angels, saints, the Blessed Virgin, and the like. For *there is one God, says the Apostle, and one Mediator between God and men.* And as departing from *the one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all, is the first*

\* Heb. ix. 14.

† 1 John i. 6.

first and highest species of idolatry; so another sort of the same sin, is setting up false and imaginary mediators, by will-worship, by a voluntary humility, as St. Paul stiles it, *and worshiping of angels*, when men intrude into things which they have not seen, vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind, and not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

## On the Anniversary of King Charles's Restoration.

Preached before the House of Commons,  
May 29th, 1758.

By Dr. G. FOTHERGILL, Principal of St. Edmund Hall,  
Oxford.

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PSALM CXXii. Ver. 6, 7, 8, 9.

*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes I will now say, "peace be within thee." Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good.*

THE peculiar excellence of the Holy Scriptures is, that *they are able to make men wise unto salvation*: and to that great end of your faith should our discourses from them be principally directed. Yet, since the road to it lies through a country, that must be passed by many sojourners at the same time; it may be a farther commendation of these writings to every lover of mankind, that they have not neglected to encourage in us all a proportionable regard to this intermediate country, and a reasonable affection for our brethren and companions in it. And occasions, surely, there may be, when these publick exhortations will properly be employed, in cultivating among our fellow-travel-  
lers



lers through life those social dispositions, which render them, not only easy in themselves, but agreeable and helpful to one another on their way.

Such an occasion, I presume, is the present ; and such the disposition, which I would now recommend as a requisite qualification for the business of this day : a day, sacred to religious joy, and thankfulness to Almighty God ; for having, almost a century ago, restored to these kingdoms the blessings of legal government and true religion ; and for having continued them down to our own times. Yet for these favours, important as they are, in vain should we hope to find joyful or thankful hearts, where there is not something of national sense, or feeling for the community. Where this amiable quality hath no place in the mind, the man, instead of being affected with joy by the peace of his country, will often be tempted to consider it as an obstruction to his own views. But, where public spirit prevails, public blessings will be received with delight and acknowledged with gratitude. Whilst the parts of the political body are in their proper state, their sympathies will be mutual : And as, *if one member suffer, all the members proportionably suffer with it ; so, if one member, much more if the body as such be honoured, all the sound members rejoice with it.*

It may not, therefore, be unsuitable to the design of this appointment, if I take occasion to explain and enforce the great social duty of loving our country : Not so much in order to implant this affection in such breasts, if such there be, as are yet strangers to it ; (that, I fear,

no words, much less mine, could effect;) as by way of stating its nature and just commendation, where it already resides, and of pointing out its proper objects, together with the due methods of exerting it.

The well-known psalm, whence my text is taken, has generally been considered as a beautiful exemplification of this lovely temper of mind. And the whole of it will appear still more applicable to the present solemnity, if we suppose with some commentators, that its royal author composed it upon his restoration to his beloved capital from an exile, into which his rebellious subjects had just before driven him. We may here imagine him, contemplating with fresh pleasure (not lessened we may be sure, by his late absence from it) the situation, the compactness and strength of his metropolis; reflecting with wonder on the many advantages which its inhabitants had wantonly hazarded, but now again enjoyed; particularly those of a ready recourse to the legal administrations of justice, a near participation of the benign influences of government, and an easy access to the solemn offices of piety; at the same time deeply sensible, how precarious all these, and every human blessing, must become upon any return of like disorder and confusion. And, from such a train of thought, how naturally might he break out in the words before us—"O pray  
" *for the peace of Jerusalem: may they prosper*  
" *that love thee!* May thy tranquillity never  
" again be disturbed by the ambition of the  
" great, the corruption of the many, or the  
" madness of the people! *Peace be within thy*  
" *walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces:* Be  
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" the former henceforward thy defence against  
 " every domestic as well as foreign enemy ;  
 " and be the latter no more debased by the in-  
 " solence of rebel-triumphs, but ever appro-  
 " priated to the purposes of royal magnificence.  
 " *For my brethren and companions' sakes, theirs,*  
 " who faithfully accompanied me through my  
 " various distresses ; and even theirs, who  
 " though late are returned to their allegiance ;  
 " *I will wish thee prosperity. Yea, because of*  
 " *the house of the Lord our God,* those stated  
 " offices of religion, which were always my  
 " delight ; for which my *longing soul* lately *cried*  
 " *out,* and to which I am now most happily re-  
 " stored, *I will,* by every just method in my  
 " power, *seek to do thee good.*"

But, without insisting farther on any such  
 special reference as hath been just supposed :  
 the words will, of themselves, suggest to our  
 consideration the following particulars :—The  
 duty of loving our country, as here recommend-  
 ed by the psalmist's example :—The objects,  
 which, like him, a lover of his country will  
 naturally have in his wishes : And—The offices,  
 whereby he will be ready to promote its true  
 interests. Which particulars I would beg leave  
 to consider, in the order above-mentioned :  
 With some application, as we go along, to the  
 more immediate occasion of our present joyful  
 assembling.

I. There are three different views in which  
 the duty may be placed, and its obligations il-  
 lustrated : either, as our country is considered  
 in itself and its constituent parts : or, as its wel-  
 fare may be set in competition with our own  
 personal interests : or, as it is contradistinguished



ed from countries not our own. In the first view, I apprehend, the love of it coincides, as far as it goes, with benevolence or concern for general happiness: in the second, it becomes disinterestedness or public spirit: in the third, it may be denominated (at least, according to the original import, if not the common use, of the term) patriotisim.

1. Now, by our country, considered in itself, we shall (I conceive) most rationally understand, not barely a certain track of land, which makes up the external appearance of it; but chiefly, the collective body of its inhabitants, with their public and joint interests.

In this view, it is very natural, and has accordingly been most usual, to observe, that our country contains every thing that is in any eminent degree entitled to our affection. If, for instance, parents or children, if brethren or kinsmen, if companions or friends, have, in proportion to the nearness of each relation, their several demands upon us for offices of kindness: if, beyond these, upon considering ourselves as members of the same community, civil or religious, we find new relations arising thence, analogous to the former, bringing new obligations along with them: still our country takes in all these. Whatever endearing connection there is in blood, vicinity, or incorporation; our country comprehends every thing of this sort. And that must, surely, itself be entitled to our love, which contains every object, that hath any peculiar claim to it.

Let me add, that our country, thus considered, includes in it our own rights and privileges, our properties and our persons. Each individual's

dual's private interests are connected with, nay bound up in, those of the community. And, if the prophet Jeremiah could rationally exhort his countrymen, in a state of captivity, to *seek the peace of the city whither they were carried away captives, for that in the peace thereof they should have peace*\*: How much more intimately must those, who enjoy the comforts of life in their own land, be concerned to promote the welfare of that state, on which the continuance of every such enjoyment depends.— Thus far, then, there appears no difficulty either in the notion or the practice of the duty before us: to wish well to our country, in this light, is like wishing the safety of that vessel, on board of which every thing dear to us in this world is embarked.

And indeed, so far is our country from requiring us, ordinarily I mean, to neglect the management of our domestic affairs from an officious solicitude about her concerns; that she expects from us a proper attention to them, as an important branch of our duty to herself. The temper blamed by her is that, whose regards not only begin at home, but end there too: a temper as little suited to the condition of individuals, as it is to the nature of society: into which whosoever voluntarily enters, or consents to partake of its protection and privileges, must in so doing virtually engage to contribute his proportion of time, attention, labour, and substance to its service. Should every member withdraw his own share of these (and what is allowable to one might be claimed by all) social union must be dissolved, and the  
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\* Jer. xxix. 7.



public no longer subsist: or, should any one resolve to pursue an interest separate from all about him; I suppose, he would soon experience the folly of such a scheme, upon finding that all others had formed (as in reference to him they most justly might form) the like resolution. In this view, prudence as well as justice requires every member to bestow a due measure of his concern upon the community: that is, to expend a part of his care by way of ensuring the benefit of the remainder.

2. But we must not leave the matter here. Publick welfare may sometimes, not only in present appearance, but in reality, interfere with private gain: and we are *next* concerned to enquire, "What the duty before us directs in cases of such competition between them."

That the interests of a whole community are, in themselves, far more valuable than those of any single member can be, is as true as that the whole is greater than any one of its parts. And, though it might be difficult to persuade single persons to estimate their own interests, if not unreasonable to expect that they should adjust their own regards, exactly according to this proportion: yet we all at first sight condemn an eagerness in any man to enrich or advance himself by methods prejudicial to general happiness; whereas the contrary disposition to postpone one's personal advantage, and to hazard even life itself, in cases of moment to the public, is presently approved by every worthy principle within us. And accordingly we find this quality not only much celebrated by the most eminent heathen writers, but often recommended, consequentially at least, by such as



have taught the world with still higher authority. That great christian grace of charity is (we know) particularly characterized as *seeking not their own* \*. And, if we are called upon, as we are more than once by St. Paul, to forego our own *pleasure* † or *profit*, for the sake of our neighbour, a private person like ourselves; we cannot but infer, that we are still more forcibly obliged to sacrifice our present benefit to the lasting interests of our country. The demands of the duty must rise in proportion as its compass is enlarged and its objects are multiplied.

Not that either reason or revelation will allow, much less require, us to surrender our most important interests, those of our immortal souls, even for the sake of our country. These no man can rationally give up, if he could be supposed to benefit the community by so doing. And therefore, if either the great *lawgiver* ‡ of the Jews, or the great *apostle* || of the Gentiles, should seem to have declared his affection for his countrymen in terms of that import; such glowing expressions must not be too strictly interpreted. Our final happiness is of too high importance to be complimented away: it is a birthright, which it would be profaneness as well as folly to sell for any consideration; which yet is, in effect, done by all, who wilfully commit, or encourage others in committing, any violation of truth or right for the sake of a party, or even of their country itself; saying, *Let us do evil that good may come.*

However, whilst we secure our innocence, and with that our title to an eternal inheritance,

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 5.      † 1 Cor. x. 24.      Phil. ii. 4, &c.  
 ‡ Exod. xxxii. 32, &c.      || Rom. ix. 3.

tance, we shall find ourselves not only obliged but encouraged to part with every thing short of these, when our country calls for it. And, by the way, so far is Christianity from giving no encouragement to the love of our country; so far is that extended self-interest which it proposeth to our hopes from being unfriendly to public spirit; that it has laid the most solid, perhaps the only solid, foundation for any exalted degrees of this virtue. Notwithstanding a few striking examples with which history may furnish us, it is not easy to assign any substantial reasons, why they, who have hope in this life only, should be forward to resign the advantages of it. But, when once our final interests are, as upon christian principles they are, certainly and amply provided for: here is room for every rational argument in favour of the public; here every generous sentiment may *have its perfect work*. Animated by such expectations *none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself*\*. In the cause of our country we *gladly spend and are spent*†; nay are ready to *lay down our lives for the brethren*‡.

3. It remains, that the duty should be stated as our country is considered in contradistinction from countries not our own: in which view the love of it is so agreeable to the propensities of our nature, that it will generally want rather to be regulated than excited in us.

For, by the love of our country in this respect we must by no means understand any such extravagant partiality for our countrymen, as operates to the exclusion of all others from our offices of humanity; nor yet such a passionate

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zeal

\* Rom. xiv. 7.

† 2 Cor. xii. 15.

‡ John iii. 16.

zeal for our own country's glory, as pursues its object by annoying and trampling upon whatever happens to be in our way to it. No: this, instead of being a commendable affection, is in every degree a blameable, in some degrees a detestable turn of mind. And, if those refined thinkers, who would insinuate, that the author of our religion has no where recommended the love of our country, mean no love of it but this; we own the charge: so far is our religion from countenancing, that it strongly condemns, such a narrow, inhospitable, spirit: And this, instead of being any discredit to it, we must have leave to think an eminent instance of its excellency and importance. Even the Jews, notwithstanding the peculiar nature of their œconomy, were commanded to treat *the stranger*\* with tenderness and affection. And we Christians (though equally concerned, by the proper *weapons of our warfare, to contend for the faith delivered to us*) are taught, without distinction of sect or country, to account every man our *neighbour* †, and to assist him as such, whose circumstances stand in need, and whose situation may place him within the reach, of our beneficence. In short; whilst we love our own country, we should never forget, that others are in the same way affected toward theirs; nor must we ever lose sight of that great law of reason as well as revelation, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them* ‡.

But, if by the love of our country these objectors mean only a love of preference to other countries;

\* Exod. xxiii. 9. 12. Levit. xix. 10. Deut. x. 19.

† Luke x. 30—37.

‡ Matt. vii. 12.



countries; whensoever they shall with impartiality peruse that book, which they affect to censure, they will hardly find one personage of any eminence therein recorded, in whose temper this affection appears not to have been a prevailing ingredient. The time would fail me to cite all the examples to this purpose: and if precepts are less frequent, they are surely less needful; since this is a disposition, which, if not strictly born with us, yet takes possession of us before we are conscious of its production, and continues to co-operate with our rational powers, often to go before them, so long as our minds retain any thing great or generous. It seems indeed to be of the same origin, and not only justifiable but amiable on the same principle, with that natural affection, which appears in every creature for those of its kind that are most nearly related to it: or, if any human creatures are found without this; we may, upon the authority\* of an inspired apostle, rank all such among the blackest characters that our degenerate nature can furnish.

Nor let this affection be condemned as a blind instinct only: it is at least such an instinct as, under due regulation, approves itself to the justest reason. Our benevolence ought indeed to reach as far as our nature itself reacheth. Our Creator *having made of one blood all nations of men* †, at how great a distance soever they may dwell on all the face of the earth; no partaker of the species must be excluded from our goodwill, or designedly from the influences of it. But then, these influences will naturally descend most on those, who are most within the sphere of  
their

\* See Rom. i. 31. and 2 Tim. iii. 3. † Acts xvii. 26.

their activity. Such a distinction among particulars is really for the beauty and benefit of the whole. Were any parents to be actuated by no peculiar yearnings for their own offspring; or, were the natives of any country equally indifferent to that with every other spot upon the globe; it may be as easily imagined, what a desolate waste such an unfriended country must soon become in this latter case, as how wretched and useless such neglected infants must be in the former. Whereas, whilst each individual employs (I say not the whole, but) the chief of his care, where nature recommends a preference; the business of the world goes on regularly and with advantage; and *every thing is beautiful in its place as well as its time*. Accordingly, the same apostle, who exhorts us to *do good unto all men*\*, leaves the exercise of our beneficence to opportunities; and not only allows, but recommends, an especial regard to *them that are of our own community, the household of faith*.

Let me just observe farther, that these reflections on the love of our country in general may, in proportion, be applied to any smaller subdivisions of it, to which we stand in a similar relation: the neighbourhood, for instance, which gave us our native air; the corporation whose privileges we enjoy; or the society, which imparted to us (what may be at least as valuable as either) an ingenuous, a virtuous and religious education. We must not, indeed, contract our good wishes, or confine our good offices, within the narrow limits of any of these. Yet, as each of them comes naturally recom-

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\* Gal. vi. 10.



mended to a particular affection ; so, other circumstances being equal, each of them may seem to have a prior claim to our voluntary services. Or, however, should any partaker of such advantages, instead of cherishing those tender sentiments that grow out of these connections, be ready, upon every fordid view, to renounce or counteract them—I shall only say, he must be a stranger to the spirit which dictated that beautiful apostrophe, *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning : if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth ; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy\**.

Upon the whole : our country is entitled to our affection in every view : in herself, as comprehending whatever in this world most deserves our concern : in competition with our own secular interests, whensoever her prosperity calls upon us to postpone, or her preservation to relinquish, them : and in comparison with other countries, so far as to prefer her honour or advantage to theirs, though not so as to exclude them from our good wishes, much less to expose them to our hatred or injurious treatment. In a word ; the duty before us must, at the lowest, restrain us from sacrificing our country's reputation, or betraying her interest, out of any selfish consideration : we must not disappoint her of our just share of service ; though our rendering it should, at the time, be to our own hinderance.

II. But, that our affection may not be thrown away upon what is useless to our country, and unworthy of our own regard, it may  
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\* Psal. cxxxvii. 5, 6.



now be proper to consider, what those objects are, which a friend to his country will rationally have in his view. And these, according to the psalmist, seem reducible chiefly to two articles: namely, its temporal felicity; here represented by the terms, peace, plentifulness and prosperity: and its public provisions for the decent and devout celebration of religious worship; intimated by his declared concern for the house of the Lord.

I. Under the former of these, I pretend not to enumerate all the ingredients in national felicity: nor will the time permit me to enlarge upon peace in its primary notion, as it signifies a state of public quiet, and freedom from wars, foreign or domestic; though it might otherwise well deserve, especially at the present juncture, to be spoken to separately, as an object of a patriot's thoughts distinct from plenty and prosperity. But, considering them jointly, I suppose, the condition of any country will not fall much short of the psalmist's wishes for his own, which is plentifully accommodated with, not only the necessaries, but the conveniences and comforts of life; in peaceable possession of such advantages, (which I need not specify) as render its inhabitants prosperous at home and respected abroad; and all these guarded by wholesome laws duly executed, under a government well established and well administered.

For, you will permit me to observe, especially on this occasion, that, as peace is necessary to give relish and enjoyment, so will laws and government always be to give security and stability, to every public blessing. Take away these, and you leave private property wholly pre-

precarious, and personal industry without fitting encouragement; and, in consequence, you cut off from national prosperity its necessary supplies. When *there was no king*, no settled government, *in Israel*, we read that *every man did that which was right in his own eyes*. The observation was thought of moment enough to be several times repeated by the sacred historian; who has also taken care to intimate how little mankind is to be trusted with so much licence, by recording some grievous outrage upon decency, justice, or even humanity, as having constantly accompanied it. Man is not, indeed, so malevolent or mischievous a being, as he has sometimes been represented. Yet, so powerfully is he affected with his own feelings for himself, and so continually does he find, or imagine that he finds, the success of his own schemes, and the gratification of his own appetites, obstructed by those of others; that, were it not for the intervention of law and authority, this world must be a deplorable scene of envying and strife, confusion and every evil work.

Justly therefore might the wise psalmist consider it as one endearing recommendation of Jerusalem, that *there were set thrones of judgment*: And justly will all lovers of their country, among other marks of their affection for it, be zealously concerned for the preservation of its order and the support of its government: *as free*; but with the freedom of civilized creatures, not of savages: a freedom, directed by rules and subject to restraints; but such rules and restraints as, if they limit the exercise, at  
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\* Judg. xvii. 6.—xvii. 1.—xix. 1.—xxi. 25.



the same time protect the enjoyment, and secure all the benefits, of it.

Happy had it been for both prince and people in the days of our forefathers had they in time been sensible of the value of an established government: and happy will it be for us, if all orders of men are yet become wise by their experience. It will not be expected, that I should here attempt to trace out the beginnings of their sorrows; or to assign to each of the then contending parties its exact share of the blame. To us, at this distance, there seem to have been occasions of jealousy given; as well by some undue stretches of power, some alarming interpretations of law, in behalf of the crown; as by some equally undue fierceness of opposition and extravagance of demand, on the part of the people; both unfortunately aggravated by several concurring circumstances of those times. Yet, I cannot doubt, but many on both sides at first sincerely meant the real good of their country. That the king himself did so, beside his approved character for virtue, piety, and goodness of heart, the concessions, which he made early in the dispute, and before his distresses could have extorted them from him, will surely by equitable judges be admitted as sufficient evidence. And, in fact, the reparation then offered for what was past, and the security given for the future, so far satisfied many reasonable men and real patriots, that they became thenceforward zealous adherents to the royal cause, convinced that it was become the cause of the kingdom. But, alas! it was then too late to save their country: a spirit of discord and suspicion was gone forth: auxiliaries



liaries were called in, who brought with them little acquaintance with, and less affection for, the English constitution: several of its former friends were by degrees become reconciled to measures, wherein they had at first never dreamt of engaging: and they, who could not go these lengths, found the business taken out of their hands, by men better prepared for what soon after followed; I mean, for such invasions of private property, such violations of public justice, such insults upon all laws, human and divine, as render the annals of those times like the *roll of a book*, that was *spread before the prophet*; which was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentation, and mourning, and woe\*.

But, to turn away our eyes from a sight so painful: after every set of men, perhaps every single man, that had in any eminent degree broken in upon the established constitution, had as eminently experienced the effects of a wanton departure from it; and had, by a memorable example of *this their foolishness*, in sacrificing public utility to private views, left us, *their posterity*, a standing admonition against *praising their saying*: Then did the same God, *who commanded the light to shine out of darkness*†, graciously vouchsafe to comfort‡ our fathers, after the time that he had plagued them, and for the years wherein they had suffered adversity; by restoring their judges as at the first, and their counsellors as at the beginning§. And, if this part of our constitution hath, on any subsequent occasions, received yet farther improvement;

\* Ezek. ii. 9, 10.

† Psal. xc. 15.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

§ Isai. i. 26.

ment; if the boundaries of the monarch's prerogative and the subject's rights, by being more explicitly declared, are become less liable to be transgressed by either, to the hazard of both; we, who enjoy these additional advantages, have not, on that account, less cause to bless God upon every return of this auspicious day, which opened the way to them.

2. Yet, after all: The best provisions merely secular, civil government itself, and this too in its most advantageous form, and under a prince the most steady in his adherence to it, will be insufficient to fill up the measure of a nation's happiness. Something farther will be wanting to complete the wishes of a friend to his country: something that can reach the heart both of governor and governed: something, that alone can, for any time, secure the peace, and sanctify the prosperity, of a community; that can render its plenteousness not a snare or a curse, but a real blessing, and prevent its being, perhaps imperceptibly, ruined under the very forms of its own admired constitution.

Sensible of this, the royal psalmist was *glad when they said unto him, we will go into the house of the Lord*. He well knew, that a constant attendance on God's public worship was one of the best preservatives of religion in the hearts of his people, one of the best evidences of its influence there; as also, that such a principle was the only security he could have of their obedience to himself, or their fidelity to each other. Without this, as he well knew, all things would soon run into disorder and confusion: unawed by the fear of God, men would at all times be prepared for any pleasing  
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vice, any gainful villany: and whilst *sentence against an evil work*\* could, for that very reason, by human judicatures be neither certainly pronounced, nor *speedily executed*; *the hearts of the sons of men* would be yet more and more *fully set in them to do evil*. Whereas, by the fear of the Lord, *men would depart from evil*†. This principle would preserve their integrity where no other could reach them; and would render their promises a sufficient security, or their oaths, where necessary, a decisive evidence. Above all, he knew, that national piety would best recommend both himself and his people to that all-powerful Being; who will not fail to make *happy that nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he chooseth for his own inheritance*.

The care of religion, therefore, and of its sacred rites, will always have a place in the thoughts of every rational lover of his country. And, blessed be God for the religious privileges as on this day *restored*, and still continued, to the people of this land: were but our wisdom in the observance of them and improvement under them equally conspicuous in the sight of the nations around us, well might they say, *surely, this great nation is a wise and understanding people*‡! Beside that daily access to the Holy Scriptures, which our church freely allows and recommends to all her members, she provides for their being thence farther instructed in words of truth and soberness, every Sabbath-day. In her public worship she requires their conformity to usages few, easy, natural;

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tural;

\* Eccl. viii. 11.

† Prov. xvi. 6.

‡ Deut. iv. 6.



tural; at a due distance, on one hand from indecent familiarity or negligence, and from burdensome pomp and multiplicity on the other: whilst by her stated offices she invites, without compelling, all devoutly disposed minds to join rationally with her in well-weighed expressions of a manly, grave, rightly directed piety. And as to those, who still unhappily exclude themselves from the benefit of these provisions; it may reasonably be expected, that the known candour and equity of her present governours will at length have the desired effect upon them. Especially since her external policy is at once best fitted to that of the state, and most agreeable to the primitive pattern: distinguished only by the advantage of being supported and encouraged, instead of being oppressed and persecuted, by the civil power: which distinction, conferred on her by the legislature, and now for many years enjoyed under the protection of our gracious Sovereign, she accepts always, in all places, with all thankfulness.

But, should any real friends to this part of the constitution of their country be disposed to consider such a protection as now become less needful, or to countenance the projects of men given to change in hopes of an ideal, but humanly unattainable, perfection: they may be pleased to recollect, with what consequences the like innovating experiments were formerly attended. When first discontented men were invited to bring in their exceptions to the ecclesiastical establishment, and to propose with boldness new plans of their own; little was it imagined, that an edifice, beautiful for its order, compact in its structure, venerable for its agree-

agreement with the model of antiquity, and in every respect fitted to be the joy of the whole land, could within any short space of time have become an object of the loudest clamour for its demolition even to the ground. Yet, when a breach was once made, all this and more soon came to pass. A few ill-judged scruples about some innocent habits and at worst harmless ceremonies of the church, were easily cherished into a determined rancour against her institutions in general. The sufferings of a few men, whose over-proportioned sufferings from two or three of her prelates were remembered much longer than the provocations they had given, quickly leavened the mass of the people into a distaste of her whole hierarchy: till, in conclusion, an order of governors, which had presided in the Christian church from its earliest settlement, was abolished as anti-christian; the decent rites of our church exploded; the use of her liturgy rendered penal; and her adherents in general, but her able as well as faithful Defender especially, exposed to such severe trials, such barbarous indignities, as a sober heathen could not have beheld without compassion and astonishment.

I forbear to recount the many acts of dissimulation and hypocrisy, the perversions of God's word, profanations of his temple, and prostitutions of the sacred character, by which this strange reformation was effected; as also what sort of purity and perfection was obtained by it; or, rather, what endless divisions and heresies of some, what enthusiasm and phrenzy of others, what contempt of ordinances and blasphemy of many more, overspread these



kingdoms in consequence of it: nor, indeed, should a theme so melancholy have been suggested to your thoughts on this day, but in order to recall them with more advantage to the proper business of it; I mean, the adoration and praise of that great Comforter of them that are cast down; who, in his own good time, turned him unto the prayer of the poor, destitute, Sons of the Church of England; and at their desire, raised up this tabernacle of David that was fallen; closing its breaches, and building it as in the days of old.—May his watchful providence ever preserve it firm and unshaken; to the glory of his own name, to the ornament and support of the reformed churches in general, and to the comfort and salvation of the people of our land! and may he, together with this, continue the other blessings of peaceful order and legal government, to our latest posterity!

III. Something, however, must be done on our part. Let us then consider, by what offices a lover of his country must endeavour to promote its welfare. And these are, *praying for it*, and *seeking to do it good*.

1. The former of these, I conceive, may well comprehend all methods of application to the Supreme Being in behalf of our country, whether by humble petition or devout thanksgiving: both of which are conditions, proper in themselves, and by his appointment necessary, according as our situation may be, to give efficacy to all our endeavours for ourselves or others. *From the Father of lights every good gift cometh down*: but to his providence we should especially ascribe the giving or the withdrawing of national blessings, the restoring of settled government



vernment and pure religion when for a time withdrawn, and the preservation of them through all those changes and chances, to which every advantage upon earth is perpetually exposed. The men of this world are indeed apt to overlook these truths, and to talk in a different language: but truths they are, notwithstanding; and this is the language, these the sentiments everywhere authorized by inspired writers. We find St. Paul in particular exhorting Timothy to take care, in the direction of religious offices, *that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks should be made for all men; for kings and all that were in authority: that they might lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty* \*. And, if such devout addresses in favour of the community in which they lived, and of those members of it especially, whose stations rendered their conduct of the most extensive influence, were in those days fit and conducive to that end; they must at all other times be proper, and, on solemn occasions of rejoicing for national benefits, peculiarly *good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour*.

And certainly if ever *the merciful and gracious Lord hath so done his marvellous works, as that they ought to be had in remembrance* †, the deliverance of this day will justify us in thus publicly and annually ascribing it to him. The value of it in itself may be in some measure estimated from what has already been suggested. But much there was also in the circumstances attending it to call for our warmest returns of thanks and praise, and to point out the adore-

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\* 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3.

† Psal. cxi. 4.

able Object to whom they are due.---When the devouring sword had been fully executing its direful commission *to go through this devoted land*; scarce a corner whereof had escaped its fury, scarce *an house been passed over in which there was not one dead*: When three, once flourishing, kingdoms had long been filled with violence, oppression, perjury, murder, often rendered still more shocking by being perpetrated under the formality of justice and the mask of piety: when those seemingly incompatible evils of anarchy and tyranny, of enthusiasm and profaneness, of bigotry and sacrilege, had for years together, with forces wonderfully united, been triumphing in the ruin of every thing great, the extirpation almost of every thing good, in these nations! what power or wisdom less than infinite could have rescued our country from wretchedness so extensive, so complicated?---at a time, when all human means for accomplishing, or even for attempting, such a work, seemed utterly desperate, if not quite exhausted:---in a method, the most desirable to the nation that could have been imagined; without any fresh effusion of her own blood, or embarrassing obligation to her neighbours:—to a degree, exceeding the most sanguine hopes of the friends to the constitution; all the breaches that had been made in both its parts being completely repaired; and the Church in particular soon after guarded by such farther securities, as have (under the protection of heaven) preserved her doctrine, worship, and privileges unto this day:—with an harmony and concurrence of all orders of men so marvellous, that (in the words of the noble historian\*)



rian \*) “ a man could not but wonder where  
 “ those people dwelt that had done all the mis-  
 “ chief, and kept the king so many years from  
 “ the comfort and support of such excellent  
 “ subjects.”

Such a restoration no man, possessed of a true love for his country, can well recollect without some sentiments of gratitude to all, who in any degree voluntarily contributed toward it: nor can we easily forget those true patriots (one of them just now mentioned) who, notwithstanding the large share that they had borne with their sovereign in his various afflictions, loved their country and knew its interests too well, to lay hold on the opportunity, then offered by the temper of the people, for complimenting him with a settlement dangerous to its liberties. Yet, what regard soever may be paid to the memory of subordinate instruments, the glory of the whole must ever be reserved for Him, who alone *bath the hearts of men at his disposal, as the rivers of water*: who can turn their fierceness to his own praise, and say with authority to the raging of this sea also, *Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.*

*This then being the day, which the Lord hath made, well may we rejoice and be glad in it.* Let it, however, be remembered, what sort of joy and gladness such a day calls for. *When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream,* said the devout psalmist †. And if something of a like incoherent and tumultuous rapture appeared in the

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conduct

\* See Lord Clarendon's hist. 8vo. vol. last, page 761.

† Psal. cxxv. 1.



conduct of our forefathers, upon so sudden a transition from the darkness of despair to the sunshine of prosperity; such irregular transports, before cool reason could well be heard, were less to be wondered at; though the luxury, dissoluteness and impiety, which too generally flowed in upon the nation at that period, could not then be excused, can hardly ever since be too much lamented. But surely, *it is high time* for us, at this distance, *to awake out of sleep*. We, who enjoy the blessings then restored, without having felt the preceding agonies, may view them with sedateness, and should acknowledge them with sobriety. Should our thankfulness for such mercies, betray us into any excess in ourselves, any violence to our brethren, any undutifulness to our governors, or any impiety toward God: all such rejoicing must be not only evil in itself, but on such an occasion monstrous. The joy, which this day requires, is a manly, decent, well-tempered joy: a joy conducted under *the fear of God*, and directed, as *whatsoever we do* should be, *to his glory*.

2. When we have thus expressed our zeal for our country by devout addresses to heaven for its prosperity; it will next be proper to exert our own endeavours by *seeking to do it good*: that is, by a constant readiness, in all proper ways, to promote its welfare; and, as its exigencies appear to require, to contribute to its support: upon a due attention to the demands of our respective stations, and the opportunities by Providence put in our power.

From persons engaged in offices of trust for the community, integrity will at all times, and  
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a proportionable degree of vigilance and activity will ordinarily, be expected. They have undertaken the care of the public; which, therefore, is become their proper business. And, though the calls of the public for the exertion of this care will be most importunate in seasons of danger; one way there is, whereby men of eminence may, in the most quiet times, be of singular service to their country; I mean, by a regard to order and virtue, and, for the sake of both, to piety and religion, as conspicuous as their rank and stations. The powerful influence of a good example adds an amiableness to their authority, and gives efficacy to their public-spirited undertakings. But, without that, vain would be all their pretences to patriotism, nay even their sincere endeavours for their country's good.

As to private persons; their activity and zeal may, at certain seasons, be more particularly wanted: and then, the concerns of the public become in some measure their's also; that is, in due subordination to their superiors, and so far as they are qualified to exert themselves usefully. Otherwise, private members of any community will generally best discharge their obligations to it by studying to be quiet, and to do their own business in it: contributing their industry to the common stock, without disturbing the industry of their neighbours; and without ostentatiously or invidiously affecting an extraordinary zeal, where no extraordinary demand appears for it.

By what more particular methods the good of his country may best be pursued, must be left to each man's discretion and integrity to deter-



determine for himself. The objects to be kept in view have been considered: and an honest and good heart will seldom be at a loss to discern the plain path that leads to them. Permit me only to observe in few words, that — In what relates to himself, the true patriot, instead of enervating his body by vicious indulgences, or over-clouding his mind by habitual excess, will study to preserve and improve the powers of both; for this, among other important ends, that he may be in constant readiness to assist his country with his best services, whensoever they shall be properly called for by it: — In his intercourse with his neighbours; instead of fomenting parties, or sowing discord among brethren; by an upright and peaceable conduct, by removing wants and relieving distresses, by rectifying prejudices and reconciling differences, he will do his part toward diffusing harmony and happiness all around him: — In his behaviour, lastly, toward his superiors and governors; instead of either betraying the liberty of others for any personal advantage, or using his own *for a cloke of maliciousness*, he will, on the steady principle of *fearing God, honour the king*; and will conscientiously *render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour*.

Such, I conceive, will be the general conduct of a real friend to his country, and such his endeavours to promote its true interest: induced thereto *for his brethren and companions' sakes*, and *because of the house of the Lord our God*: In short, by every motive that can engage his

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zeal,



zeal, as he is a social or a religious being; as he is a man or a christian.

To conclude. Our obligations to *pray for the peace of our Jerusalem*, and to *seek its good*, are at all times many and powerful, but more particularly urgent in critical conjunctures; and it is peculiarly becoming, on *this* day, for our *tribes to go up, even the tribes of the Lord, to the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.*---But then, in order to render our devotions consistent, and our endeavours uniform, we must rectify every thing amiss in our tempers; mortifying in particular those mean and selfish lusts, or those boisterous and over-bearing passions, which were the chief occasions of confusion in the days of our forefathers, and which are in all times the most usual disturbers of public tranquillity. Be it our ambition, by an honest application to the duties of our proper stations, to bring in our respective shares toward the plenteousness of the community; and, according to our several abilities, to contribute chearfully and loyally to the maintenance of that order, and the support of that government, on which our freedom and our happiness in this world depends. Above all; by a constant and devout attendance on the worship and ordinances of our Zion, let us sanctify all our other endeavours for its prosperity, and effectually recommend it to his favour, *whose kingdom ruleth over all.*---So shall our aims for the public good be rightly directed; and *God, even our own God, shall give us his blessing.* And, when every connection with this our earthly country, when *this earth* itself, *shall be dissolved*; we shall be admitted into full possession

possession of *our citizenship* \*, [Πολίτευμα] our *settlement* truly so called, in that *better country*, which is an *heavenly*; that *Jerusalem*, which is *above and the mother of us all*: a city, that alone is at perfect *unity in itself*; whence party and faction are for ever excluded; where our selfish and our social affections will be completely reconciled, because infinitely satisfied: for *God shall be all in all*!

\* Compare Phil. iii. 20. Heb. xi. 16. Gal. iv. 26.



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## On Whit-Sunday.

By Archbishop TILLOTSON.

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ACTS, Chap. ii. Ver. 1, 2, 3, 4.

*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

ONE of the chief designs of the dispensation of God toward the Jews, and of the giving of the law to them by Moses, was to be a type of the christian church, and of the dispensation of the gospel by the Son of God; and therefore no wonder, if there be a great correspondence between them, and that the Divine Providence should so order the event of things, that the seasons of dispensing the great evangelical blessings should happen at the same times when the great blessings of the law, which were the types of them, were dispensed and commemorated. Thus our Saviour, who was *the Lamb of God*, was slain and offered up at the same time that the Passover was kept, and the paschal lamb was slain and offered up among the



the Jews; and the redemption of the world from the slavery of sin and satan, is celebrated by Christians, at the very same season of the year, when the Israelites from the Egyptian slavery was commemorated by them: and as at the time of Pentecost (which was fifty days after) the Jews were appointed to rejoice before the Lord, and to offer their first-fruits by way of grateful acknowledgement to God for the fruits of the earth, then newly gathered in; so did God likewise at the same time impart the first-fruits of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, who were to be the first and chief labourers in that spiritual harvest, to which they were appointed by *the Lord of the harvest*: and which is yet more remarkable, at the same season that the law was delivered to the Jews from mount Sinai, and the first covenant established, namely, at the time of Pentecost, as is commonly supposed by the Jewish doctors, and as may probably be collected from the text, Exod. xix. 1. I say, at that very time, the gospel, which contains the terms of the new covenant, began to be published from mount Sion, in as wonderful, though not so terrible a manner, as the law was given from mount Sinai. And thus it was foretold by the ancient prophets, Isaiah ii. 3. and Micah iv. 2. that *out of Sion should go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

I shall briefly explain the words, and as I pass along make some short observations upon them, and then fix upon that which is mainly intended in them, viz. this first and most miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost; which was conferred upon the Apostles when they were assembled

bled together at Jerusalem upon the day of Pentecost.

*When the day of Pentecost was fully come, that is, when the fifty days after Easter were fulfilled, upon the fiftieth day, which was called the day of Pentecost, they were all with one accord in one place. They were all, that is, all the twelve Apostles; for upon them it was that the gift of tongues was bestowed; because they were appointed to be the chief publishers of the gospel, having been eye-witnesses of our Saviour's miracles, and particularly of his resurrection from the dead. There is no mention of any other in this chapter, but only of the twelve Apostles; ver. 14. we find Peter and the eleven spoken of; and ver. 37. it is said that the multitude, who were astonished at this miracle, spake to Peter and the rest of the Apostles.*

*They were all with one accord in one place.* Unity is an excellent qualification and disposition for the Holy Spirit of God and his gifts; for which reason, the peace and good agreement of Christians is called by St. Paul, *the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace*. When the Apostles were *of one heart, and one mind*, then the Holy Spirit of God came down upon them in this wonderful manner.

Ver. 2. *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind. As they were together waiting for the promise of the Father, all on the sudden there came a sound, as of a strong gust of wind. This was a fit emblem of the Divine Spirit; for to this our Saviour had compared it, in his discourse with Nicodemus. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence*

*whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit\*.*

*As of a rushing mighty wind.* To signify to us, that the publication of the gospel was attended with the same divine presence and power, that the giving of the law was; but not with the same circumstances of terror, which the Apostle to the Hebrews describes, when he sets forth to us the difference between Mount Sinai and Mount Sion, that is, between the two dispensations of *the law and the gospel*†. Speaking of mount Sinai, from which the law was given, *ye are not come, says he, unto the mount, that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; that is, that terrible voice of God, wherein the ten words of the law were delivered; which voice then shook the earth, as the Apostle tells us, ver. 26. A voice so terrible, that they who heard it, earnestly begged, that they might hear it no more.* These were all circumstances of great horror: but at the coming down of the Holy Ghost, here was no trumpet nor terrifying voice, no thunder, nor darkness, nor tempest, only the sound, as it were, of a strong gust of wind, as a sensible signification of a divine presence and power.

*And it filled all the house where they were sitting.* The whole house, to represent the world, which was to be filled with the sound of the gospel, according to that of the psalmist cited by St. Paul, Rom. x. 18. where speaking of the general publication of the gospel, *their sound, says he, went out into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world.*

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\* John iii. 8.

† Heb. xii. 18, 19.



*It filled all the house.* This is that which, ver. 5. of this chapter, our Saviour calls *baptizing the Apostles with the Holy Ghost*, so that they who sat in the house were as it were immersed in the Holy Ghost, as they who were baptized with water, were overwhelmed and covered all over with water, which is the proper notion of baptism.

Ver. 3. *And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, as it were of fire, and sat upon each of them.* Cloven tongues, to signify the diversity and distribution of them; this gift being imparted to every one of the Apostles: for it is said that these tongues *sat upon each of them*.

*Cloven tongues as it were of fire*, to signify the penetrating virtue and efficacy of their preaching. And this is that which John the Baptist calls *baptizing with the Holy Ghost, and with fire*, meaning the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, in the form of fiery tongues; divided, to signify the diversity of them. At first men were all of one language; and the confusion and division of tongues was a curse and punishment upon them, and the cause of their dispersion through the world; but now, God by the gift of several tongues designed to gather mankind together, and to unite them in one religion.

*And it sat upon each of them.* These cloven fiery tongues *sat upon each of the Apostles*, that is, remained visibly upon them for some time; to signify the permanency of this gift of tongues. It was not like several of the other miraculous gifts, which did not constantly reside upon them; for they had them not at all times, nor when they pleased, but as God was pleased to

dispenſe and communicate them: but this gift of tongues was conſtant, becauſe they had continual uſe of it; and it was common to all the Apoſtles, becauſe they were to be the publiſhers of the goſpel, and the witneſſes of our Lord's reſurrection, which was the great miracle whereby the goſpel was to be confirmed.

Ver. 4. *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and began to ſpeak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And began to ſpeak with other tongues:* the vulgar tranſlation renders it, *variis linguis, with divers tongues*; that is, they ſpoke ſeveral languages beſide their own mother tongue, or as it is expreſſed in our Saviour's promiſe to the Apoſtles, Mark xvi. 17. *with new tongues.* *Theſe ſigns,* ſays our Lord before his aſcenſion, *ſhall follow them that believe; they ſhall ſpeak with new tongues*; that is, they ſhould all on the ſudden ſpeak languages which they had never learned, nor had any knowledge of before.

I know not who was the firſt author of that conceit, that the miracle was not in the ſpeakers, but in the hearers; that is, the Apoſtles ſpoke in their own mother tongue (the Syriac) and the hearers of ſeveral nations heard them every one in their own language; which indeed muſt be acknowledged to be as great a miracle, or greater, than if the Apoſtles had ſpoken ſo many different languages: but this ſeems to be a very groundleſs, and unreaſonable conceit, and very contrary to the relation of this miraculous gift, and to all the circumſtances of it. For the text expreſſly ſays, that they ſpoke with other tongues, that is, in languages different from their mother tongue, in which they ſpoke before,



before, otherwise they could not be called *other, or new tongues*. And 1 Cor. xii. 28. the Apostle, among the several gifts which God had bestowed upon the church, mentions *diversity of tongues*, which had not been true, if the Apostles had all spoken in one language. And ver. 30. he makes a difference between the gift of speaking several languages, and interpreting things spoken in divers tongues. *Do all, says he, speak with tongues? do all interpret?* But if what the Apostles had spoken in one language, had been heard by those of several nations in their own language, there had been no need of interpretation. And chap. xiv. ver. 2. *He that speaketh in an unknown tongue, speaketh not unto men, but unto God, for no man beareth him; that is, no man understandeth what he saith, God only knows it; whereas if they heard every one in their own language, they all understood what was said.* And ver. 13. *Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret.* But what need of that, if every one heard what was spoken in his own tongue? And ver. 16. the Apostle says, *that he that was unlearned, could not say Amen at giving of thanks in an unknown tongue; because he understood not what was said.* And ver. 27. *If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at most by three, and that by course, and let one interpret.* All which plainly contradicts that foolish conceit, that the miracle of the gift of tongues was not in the speakers, but the hearers.

That which seems to have given occasion to this error, was, that they could not understand how any man should at the same time speak di-



vers languages : but there is no ground at all to suppose so ; because it is not said, that any of the Apostles did at the same time speak several languages (which is impossible) but that the Apostles spake several languages, so that the several nations then present heard some or other of the Apostles speaking in their own language. So that to trouble ourselves no farther about this idle conceit, the miracle was not, that every one of the Apostles did speak several languages at the same time ; but that they all spake on a sudden languages which they had never learned before ; so that the people of several nations, that were then present, did then hear some or other of the Apostles speaking to them in their own language.

Having thus explained the several expressions and passages in the text,

I come now to speak to the main argument contained in them, viz. this miraculous gift which was conferred on the Apostles, of speaking all on the sudden the languages of all nations, with whom they had occasion to converse, tho' they had never learned them before.

And in the handling of this argument, these following particulars will be fit to be considered, and inquired into by us.

First, the strangeness of this gift or miracle.

Secondly, the clear evidence of this miracle, that it was real, and that there was no manner of imposture or deceit in it, nor could there be any suspicion of it.

Thirdly, the wonderful effect of it immediately, and upon the spot, upon the very day, and in the place where it was first wrought.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, the great necessity and usefulness of it.

Fifthly, the reason why it was the first of all the miraculous gifts, and so visibly conferred upon the Apostles, before any of the rest.

Sixthly and lastly, I shall inquire, whether there be any necessity now, and consequently any probability of the renewing of this miracle, in order to the conversion of the infidel world, and those many and great nations in the remoter parts of the world, which do still continue strangers and enemies to the Christian religion.

First, the strangeness of this gift or miracle. It was of that nature, that the like was never known in the world, neither before nor since the first ages of Christianity, upon any occasion whatsoever; nor can we well imagine any other sort of miracle that could probably affect men more, and strike them with greater wonder and admiration, and have been a more sensible demonstration of a divine power and presence accompanying the Apostles, than to see and hear them all on the sudden perfectly to speak so many languages, which they had never learned before.

Especially if all the circumstances of the thing be duly weighed and considered; that they who pretended to be endowed with this gift, were not strangers newly arrived and come to Jerusalem, who before they came thither might possibly by great study and pains have attained to the knowledge and skill of several languages, (each of them suppose two languages apiece) and have craftily combined together to impose upon the world, by the pretence and ostentation of such a miracle: but these persons



were known to all that dwelt in Jerusalem, and had for a long time been taken notice of, as the disciples and followers of Jesus, who was lately crucified among them; their education was known, and the meanness of their condition, that they were simple and illiterate persons, who never had the advantage or opportunity of attaining to this skill in an ordinary way; and therefore it must be concluded to have been an extraordinary and supernatural gift.

Beside, that this miracle was very publicly wrought, and the noise of it in a few hours drew together the strangers of several nations, who being become profelytes of the Jewish religion, dwelt at Jerusalem; these all coming together, upon the noise and fame of this miracle, found it to be true, and as appears from the history, were so well satisfied of the reality of it, that a very great number, upon the occasion of it, and upon that very day, became profelytes to the Christian religion, and joined themselves to the Apostles and their followers, (who were then but few in number) and were presently admitted into the Christian church by baptism, the usual ceremony of admitting profelytes among the Jews. This was a present and great effect, and is a great evidence and confirmation of the truth and reality of the thing: but this I shall have occasion to speak more fully to, when I come to the fifth particular which I proposed.

I add farther, that our Saviour seems to have reckoned this as one of the greatest of miracles, and therefore to have reserved it, for an instance and demonstration of the glorious power which he was invested withal, after his ascension into  
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heaven;



heaven; as may very probably be collected from that declaration and promise which he made to his Apostles, a little before his departure from them: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father,*" that is, in order to the sending the Holy Ghost, to endow them with power from on high\*, to qualify them for the publishing of the gospel, which they were forbidden to enter upon till this promise was made good to them. But what were these greater works, which he here promiseth to enable them to do, after he was gone to his Father? for he expressly promiseth, that they should not only do *the works which he had done, but greater works than those*: and what could these be? Our Saviour had wrought many and great miracles almost in all kinds imaginable, he had cast out devils, and healed all sorts of infirmities and diseases; he had changed nature, by turning water into wine, and had stopped the course of it, by stilling the winds and the sea by his word; and he had raised the dead; and now what work could that be which was greater than any of these? Even that which I am speaking of, the miraculous power of speaking all languages, without learning them; a thing never heard of in the world before. And this was the first sensible effect of the coming of the Holy Ghost upon them, the first miraculous power with which he endowed his Apostles, after he was ascended into heaven, and gone to his Father: an evident testimony of the glory and power which he was invested withal, after

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\* John xiv. 12.

he was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God, to signify both the honour and power which was conferred upon him, in that he enabled his Apostles when he was absent from them, to do that, which whilst he was present with them, he had never enabled them to do, nor ever did himself; all which tends to advance this miracle, and to shew the greatness and strangeness of it above any other. And unless we fix it upon this miracle, it will be hard, if not impossible, to give a good account of the accomplishing of that solemn promise of our Saviour to his disciples, after he should be gone to his Father, that is, after his ascension into heaven; *verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father.* Now what miraculous work can be instanced in, that was done by the Apostles, and was *greater* than any our Saviour did, when he was upon earth, but this only of speaking all languages, on the sudden, without ever having learned them? which consideration alone does confirm me past all doubt, that our Saviour in this promise meant the miraculous gift of tongues, which was the first gift that was conferred upon them, after he was ascended into heaven, and gone to his Father. I proceed,

Secondly, to consider the clear evidence of this miracle, that it was real, and that there could be no suspicion of any manner of imposture and deceit in it.

It was publicly wrought before many witnesses, and those the most competent of all other, because they were highly prejudiced  
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against



against the Apostles, and great enemies to them, as being the disciples of him whom they had so lately crucified as an impostor. They gave clear proof of this miraculous power in the presence of great multitudes of several nations, who heard them every one speaking to them in their own language: and beside the present demonstration of this miraculous gift, to those of several nations that dwelt at Jerusalem, they gave evidence of it in all places and nations whither they went preaching the gospel; so that this miracle accompanied and continued with them, till the gospel was made known to a great part of the then known world, and lasted for a whole age, and till there was no farther need and use of it.

But it may be said, that though this was sufficiently evident to them that dwelt at Jerusalem, who knew the Apostles, and the circumstances of their education; yet it was not so credible to others, who lived remote from Jerusalem, and neither knew the Apostles, nor the manner of their education, nor were witnesses of the miraculous rise and beginning of this gift of tongues. These could only hear them speak in their language; but whether their knowledge of this language had been acquired by study, or was supernatural and infused, for this they had only common fame, and the Apostles own word, which may seem to have been but a slender evidence for a thing so strange. And so it must be acknowledged to be, if the Apostles affirmation, that this gift was supernaturally conferred upon them, had not been otherwise countenanced and supported; as it was in a very extraordinary and remarkable manner,



manner, by their being endowed with a power to work other miracles of all kinds, which they did every where, and very frequently upon all occasions. And this was sufficient to give credit to what they affirmed, concerning this supernatural gift of tongues: for when they saw them work other miracles of all sorts, they had no reason to doubt of the truth and reality of this miraculous gift of tongues, which was abundantly confirmed by the other miraculous powers with which they were endowed. So that the gospel, wherever it came, carried its own evidence along with it, and was confirmed by the very manner of its conveyance and delivery; and well might men entertain it as a divine doctrine, when the very manner and means, whereby it was conveyed to the world, was so strange and astonishing a miracle as was never wrought in the world before, upon any occasion whatsoever. And this will yet be farther evident, if we consider in the

Third place, the wonderful effect which this miracle immediately had upon the spot, and on the very day when it first appeared.

It had so glaring an evidence, and carried such conviction in it, that the doctrine which they who were endowed with miraculous gifts did preach, was immediately received and entertained by a very great number of the hearers; who, upon the conviction of this great miracle, became profelytes to this new religion, and were solemnly admitted to the profession of it by baptism; as we read, ver. 41. of this chapter; where after St. Peter had made an end of his sermon to the people upon this occasion, it

is said, *then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.* Here was a mighty effect, *three thousand* converted at one sermon, being convinced by the evidence of this miracle. And it was a very immediate effect; for it is said, *that the same day three thousand were added to the church.* Here was an effect proportionable to the greatness and strangeness of its cause; a mighty victory gained over the prejudices of men, and the powers of darkness, by the light and conviction of this miracle, which our Saviour seems to have kept in reserve for this great occasion, when the gospel and religion was to be first published, and to make its solemn entrance into the world. Here was a large portion of first-fruits, and a great earnest of that spiritual harvest, which the Apostles had begun to reap; of which the first-fruits among the Jews were a type: for their harvest also was at this very season of the year; as I noted before.

Fourthly, we will consider the great usefulness of this miraculous gift, for the more easy and speedy conveyance of the doctrine of Christianity, and the diffusing and spreading the knowledge of it in the world; and this, if we consider it, not as a miracle, but only as a means so very convenient to this purpose, that by the advantage of it, the gospel made a greater progress in the space of a few years, than in human probability could have been made without it in many ages; and it was spread farther in thirty years, than could in reason have been expected in fifteen hundred, by natural and ordinary



dinary means. *So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed*; being carried on in so powerful and supernatural a manner.

Fifthly, we will consider, why this was the first miraculous gift, conferred upon the Apostles more visibly, and before any of the rest. The other miraculous powers were only visible in their effects; but this was visible, not only in the effects of it, but likewise in the cause and in the manner of its being conferred: *for the Holy Spirit rested upon them, in the form of fiery cloven tongues*; to signify not only the diversity of languages which they should be enabled to speak, but the quick and piercing efficacy of their speech. The reason of all which seems to be, because this was the greatest of all miracles, and therefore fit to be first: for, as I shewed before, this, in the judgment of our Saviour (who best understood the different degrees of miracles) was greater than any of those which he himself in his life-time had wrought; and likewise, because this miracle was of greater use than any of the rest, and more necessary to the effectual discharge of their apostolical office, and to the easy success, and more speedy effect of it. For by this miraculous gift more especially, the Apostles were, as it were, consecrated to their office, and made capable to discharge it with ease and effect; their office being to publish the doctrine of the gospel to the world, and to be witnesses of our Saviour's resurrection from the dead, which was to be the great confirmation of his doctrine; neither of which they could, with any probability of effect and success, have done without this miraculous gift: for what slow progress  
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must they have made, and how little could they have advanced in this work, had they either done all by interpreters, or been put to have learned the languages of the several nations, to which they had been to preach, before they could have published this doctrine among them?

The Jews, who were very zealous of their religion, (which was likewise from God, and was attested by miracles) upon occasion of several calamities which befel them, and carried them into captivity, were dispersed in several nations; and yet how slowly, for want of this gift, did they gain profelytes to their religion? and how few did they convert to it in the space of four or five hundred years? by which we may judge how little Christianity would have gained upon the world, had it not been countenanced and assisted from heaven in this miraculous manner. I come now to the

Sixth and last thing which I proposed to inquire into; namely, whether there be any necessity now, and consequently probability of the renewing of this miracle, in order to the conversion of infidels, and the gaining over of those many and great nations in the remoter parts of the world, who are still strangers and enemies to the Christian religion.

That which would induce a man to hope well in this case, is, that without some such miraculous gift, there is little or no probability of the conversion of infidel nations; unless God should be pleased, by some unexpected means, to bring over to Christianity some powerful prince of great reputation for his wisdom and virtue; who by the influence of his example, and by his favour and countenance,  
might

might give advantages to the planting of it among his subjects. And yet considering the inveterate and violent prejudices of men against a new religion, such an attempt would, in all human probability, be more likely to end in the ruin of the prince, and the overturning of his government, than in the establishment of a new religion. Of which kind there have been several instances very remarkable in Japan and Æthiopia, and perhaps in places and times nearer to us, and within our own memory.

But if any such thing should be attempted by private persons, the undertaking would meet with such insuperable obstacles, not only from the prejudices and interests of men, but from the great difficulty of gaining languages so different from our own, that it must in all likelihood have a very slow progress, and at last fall to the ground, for want of proper and effectual means to carry it on. For though the morality of the Christian religion be admirable, and very apt to recommend itself to the unbiassed and impartial reason of mankind (if any such thing were any where to be found;) yet the death of the Son of God is such a stumbling-block, as it is very hard for human reason to get over. Of which the Jesuits in China were so sensible, that according to their usual sincerity, they thought best to conceal that most essential part of the Christian doctrine, which relates to the death and sufferings of our Saviour. So I am sure St. Paul took it to be, when he tells the Corinthians, that *he determined to know nothing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. This it seems he looked upon as the most material and valuable  
part



part of the Christian religion, and of greatest consequence to be known by us. But the Jesuits it seems thought otherwise, and therefore concealed it from their converts. For which most shameful and unchristian practice, several of them were very lately under prosecution at Rome.

Beside all this, the matters of fact upon which the truth of Christianity does necessarily depend, as the birth, and life, and miracles, and death, and resurrection of our Blessed Saviour, and his visible ascension into heaven: I say, these matters of fact, though we have a most credible history and relation of them brought down to us, do not carry so strong and sensible a conviction in them, to those who never heard of them before, as to be able to conquer and bear down a violent prejudice; nor is it in reason to be expected, that these things should easily be admitted by those who are utter strangers to our history of former times, and consequently not fit to judge of what value they are.

I speak not this to discourage any from using their best endeavours to propagate our religion among infidels, where the providence of God opens a door, and gives any opportunity for it. Among the many bad things that have been done in the church of Rome, there is one thing very much to their honour, that they have been at very great charge and pains in their missions for the conversion of infidel nations, especially in the eastern parts of the world, to that which they account the true Christian religion. And if the matter had been as honestly managed, as I hope it was piously intended, and their charity and zeal had been equally



equally warm for the conversion of the northern infidels, where there is nothing to be met with but frost and cold, as it hath been for the conversion of those parts of the world, where gold and spices abound, it had deserved great praise, notwithstanding their mistakes in religion, and the great mixture of errors and corruptions in it.

And it is no small reproach to the Protestant religion, that there hath not appeared an equal zeal among us for this purpose; and that to our unwearied endeavours to promote the interest of trade in foreign parts, there hath not been joined a like zeal and industry for the propagating of the Christian religion; which might surely be attempted, with more than ordinary advantage, in those places where we have so free a commerce.

It is not good for men to be confident, where they are not certain; but it seems to me not impossible, if the conversion of infidels to Christianity were sincerely and vigorously attempted by men of honest minds, who would make it their business to instruct those who are strangers to our religion in the pure doctrine of Christianity, free from all human mixtures and corruptions: it seems to me in this case, not at all improbable, that God would extraordinarily countenance such an attempt, by all fitting assistance, as he did the first publication of the gospel: for as the wisdom of God is not wont to do that which is superfluous, so neither is it wanting in that which is necessary. And from what hath been said upon this argument, the necessity seems to be much the same that it was at first.

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I would not be mistaken in what I have said about this matter; I do not deliver it as positive, but only as probable divinity, no wise contrary to Scripture, and very agreeable to reason.

Thus much may suffice to have spoken concerning this miraculous gift of tongues, conferred upon the Apostles at the time of Pentecost.



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## On Whit-Monday.

By the Rev. STRICKLAND GOUGH, M. A.

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MATTHEW, Chap. xxv. Ver. 21.

*His Lord said unto him, well done thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

THESE words are part of a very instructive parable, wherein our Saviour sets the whole design of life, and all the advantages we enjoy in it, in a light, whereby every man may know both what he has to do, and what he has to expect. The advantages we enjoy, of whatever kind they are, whether we receive them from the providence, or from the grace of God, are represented as talents, or sums of money, put into our hands for us to improve, and make the most of that we can. Improvement and success are naturally the offspring of industry and right application; and therefore according as men have improved their talents, that is, have been diligent and industrious in the employment of them, they are represented as rewardable with greater, or less, preferments, but those who have been slothful and negligent, and have made no proportional improvement of what was intrusted with them, are supposed to be thrown into a dungeon of outer darkness,



darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth \*.

This is the purport of the parable. A certain *rich man* is said to have *travelled into a far country*, and to have *left his goods with his servants*; with *one five talents*, with *another two*, and with *another one*. He that had *received five talents*, went and traded with the same, and *made them other five talents*; and at his lord's return was advanced to be *ruler over five cities*. He likewise that had *received two talents*, gained other two, and was promoted to be *ruler over two cities*. But he that had *received one only*, went and hid it in the earth, and at his lord's return gave it back to him, without the least accession or increase; and instead of being advanced, like the other two, is degraded and put into prison.

And it being the manner in Scripture to describe the rewards of the virtuous and good in the future life, by such sensible representations; the lesson we are to learn from this parable is, to employ the talents God has put into our hands to the best advantage of virtue, and the promoting his honour and glory. And the more extensively virtuous and useful we can be, the better we shall answer this end.

Now the talents God has given to mankind are different, according to their different genius and situation in the world; and this is taken notice of in the parable; where *the man travelling into a far country*, is said to give to one of his servants *five talents*, to another *two*, and to another one, to every man according to his *several ability*; or as it might be rendered,

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according

\* Ver. 30.

according to their proper powers, or capacities : and therefore their improvement must be accordingly. In discoursing on this subject, I shall

I. Make a few general observations on the improvement we are to make of the talents God has given us ; and specify some of the most conspicuous. And,

II. Shew the wisdom, and benefit of it. From which I shall shew,

III. The true state and condition of this world.

I. I shall make a few general observations on the improvement we are to make of the talents God has given us, and specify some of the most conspicuous.

We are not to satisfy ourselves then with making a little, but we must make all the improvement that we can ; the same arguments that will conclude for the one, concluding likewise for the other : as a servant, left intrusted with his master's affairs, as we are represented to be in the parable, would justly incur his displeasure if he did not make the current profit of his goods, notwithstanding he might make some little advantage of them. But as men in traffic and merchandize make use of all the opportunities they can of advancing their substance, have an eye upon every prospect of gain, and lay up in store against a time of profit and advantage ; so must we do in the important affairs of another world, in which there can be no possible degree of covetousness, no intemperate desire after more, nor time when we may retire, and enjoy the fruit of our labours. This we can never do in the present  
5 life,

life, but must continue growing in grace to the very last day of it; and, as St. Luke has the parable, *to occupy till our Lord and master come*, \*, to call us to an account.

And of this we can make no manner of doubt if we will only take time to consider that the talents God has put into our hands are not our own, but his: and a person of faithfulness and integrity will make more conscience of managing what is intrusted with him by another, than that which is his own; because he has a right over his own, to do with it as he pleases, but has no right over that which is another man's, to do otherwise than according to direction.

Moreover, this fidelity in the improvement of our talents must be shewn in the smallest, as well as in the greater and more important; for, as our Saviour observes, *He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much* †; for the same principle that will suffer a man to be unjust at all will be unlimited. Nor are we even to flatter ourselves that we shall go unpunished, because we do no hurt in life: we are to do all the positive good that we can. The servant who had received one talent, was very careful not to lose it, or squander it away; was guilty of no riot or extravagance, but hides it cautiously in the earth, as near as he could contrive, out of the reach of thieves and accidents, and gave it back, safe and undiminished, to his master; and yet for want of improvement is thrown into outer darkness.

F 3

And

\* Luke xix. 10.

† Ibid.



And if this is the case of those to whom the smallest and fewest talents are committed ; what shall we think of those who make no good use, or a bad one, of a greater number of the more noble, and improveable ones ?

1. How many are there that enjoy extraordinary advantages of knowledge, for instance ? Whose parts and abilities are great, and their friends able to give them an education ; and to whom, by a greater aptitude to learn, it becomes easy and familiar ? Who find out new tracks of knowledge that were never beaten before ; or make improvements and new discoveries, in those that were but imperfectly or obscurely known ? From these it will certainly be expected that they should employ their powers to the honour of God, and the service and convenience of mankind ; and not wantonly indulge in mere speculation, or the idle amusements of a cloistered life. Those who search more minutely into the works of nature will naturally be required to ascribe greater glory to God, as they have stronger convictions of the existence and providence of God ; there being nothing in nature but what furnishes demonstration thereof. The heavens, the earth, the structure of our own bodies, all acknowledge them, and exhort to the worship of him, proportionably to the increase of wonders they discover. It is either ignorance, or the most superficial observation, or great perverseness of heart, that makes men atheists or profane. The late prince of philosophers among us \*, in his endeavours to explain the operations of nature, resolves his first principle, namely

\* Sir Isaac Newton,

namely *gravitation*, with piety equal to his philosophy, wholly into the will, and constant providence of the Creator. How can these men sufficiently admire his wisdom, and adore his contrivance? And how inexcusable are they, if every thing they see, does not tend to lift up their hearts in praises, and acknowledgments of him, *who created the heavens, and stretched them out, that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it, that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein* \*.

Equally, or more, criminal are they whose studies are bent to the examining, and searching into the springs, and foundations of moral knowledge, if they do not faithfully employ it in the cultivating the principles of it in the hearts both of themselves and of mankind, to the honour of God. And, were it not that we see in fact among ourselves, and have accounts in history of many, whose writings have been highly esteemed and valued, and been of infinite service in forming the principles of others, but whose lives and conversation have been quite the reverse of every thing they taught; one would not imagine there could be such a contrariety in principle and practice. Exactly the reverse of the Christian writer, *non magna loquimur, sed vivimus*, we do not so much recommend virtue by our eloquence, as by our lives. But such knowledge will be the highest aggravation of their not practising agreeably to it. As in the gospel, *That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be*

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beaten

\* Is. xliii. 5.

*beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more\*.*

In short, knowledge of all kinds has a natural tendency to promote virtue and religion. Knowledge of the world, and of history, gives great opportunity, by observing the different tempers, and inclinations, and conduct of mankind, with their several issues, to avoid the errors into which men are apt to be hurried. For the history of the world contains little more than a series of misery and unhappiness, arising from false conduct and irregular pursuits. Which would lead a wise man to shun those fatal rocks upon which so many have split: to conduct himself better, and to pursue more rational pleasures. — It should likewise lead those who see so much of the different sentiments and opinions of wise and good men, to great moderation and brotherly affection. And it should lead those who see so much of the care and providence of God over the world, to the highest love and veneration of him. In short, there are so many inestimable advantages of knowledge, if men would but make use of them, that it is infinitely surprising to see how wretchedly it is perverted, and how many *are wise only to do evil, but to do good have no knowledge.*

2. Another of the great and important talents which God puts into the hands of some, and whereby, if they are faithful, they are capable

\* Luke xii. 47, 48.



capable of great service to him their master, is, what some would chuse to call, the gifts of nature. That their genius turns them to any particular useful way of serving mankind ; by either first finding out something beneficial to society, or by making farther improvements, or bringing to perfection what was found out before, or making such discoveries as may be beneficial to those that come after them : and the improvement of these will be required at their hands. Were men to be slothful and indolent in these respects, how many things would never have been discovered ; or would be quite lost after a discovery ; or never be revived, after they had been lost for some ages ? We may judge of the wickedness of this, by the benefits we enjoy at this day from the arts and industry of our ancestors ; the several implements they have invented in husbandry, agriculture, geometry, astronomy, navigation, architecture, medicine, surgery, and the like ; together with the more modern inventions of telescopes and all kinds of optical glasses, which give us such a distinct and noble insight into the works of God ; raising in us the most sublime ideas, and carrying us to the utmost height of rational pleasure. And what indignation would it have given us at the inventors and improvers of these arts, if they had buried them in oblivion, uncommunicated to mankind ? Or what detestation must we have conceived against such persons, if they had employed their parts and abilities, to corrupt, and debauch, and vitiate others ? Nay, if they had meanly applied them only to the purposes of their own covetousness and ambition ?

3. On others God, in his good providence, has bestowed great riches, and possessions of this world; and these are represented in Scripture as stewards intrusted with them only for their master's service, out of which they are allowed merely a competency for their own support, but are accountable for all the rest. And he will certainly deal very severely with those that have *embezzled their Lord's goods*: wasting them in indulging to their vicious and luxurious appetites; not laying them out in good works, and charitable offices toward their fellow-creatures: which they must do in proportion to what God has bestowed upon them; the only rule that can be laid down for charity.—Accordingly it was the rule our Saviour judged by in the gospel, when *he beheld how the people cast money into the treasury*; for though *many that were rich cast in much*, yet upon seeing a certain poor widow throw in two mites, which make but a farthing, *he calleth unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance: but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living* \*. There is not a severer woe any where denounced in the Scripture, than that against rich men who have mis-improved, or abused their wealth, contrary to the purposes for which it was bestowed upon them, *Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is can-*  
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\* Mark xii. 43.



kered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh, as it were fire: ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers, which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure upon the earth, and been wanton. Ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter \*. And whoever has incurred this woe, will not find it practicable to buy it off by the most lavish bequests of charity on a death-bed; for their riches are not their own, but God's, and they had much better have put them to the exchanger's, that at his coming he might have received his own with usury.

4. There is another talent Providence puts into the hands of some few persons, in the management of which great care and improvement are required, and that is power and authority: and the manner of rewarding the good and faithful in the parable, with making them *rulers over many things*, does very naturally and obviously point this out to us. There cannot be a more vain and idle thought enter into the heart of man, than that power is put into any one's hands for their own sake; or that Providence has the least view to the gratification of their pride therein. The design of magistracy is merely the service and benefit of the people; and power carried to a greater height, is absolutely inconsistent with the whole nature and genius of the Christian religion. When the ten disciples were moved with indig-

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\* James v. 1, &c.



*nation against the two brethren, the children of Zebedee, upon their mother's desiring that they might sit, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left of our Saviour in his kingdom; he explains to them the true nature of ambition, and power, and precedency, in the following manner, But Jesus called them unto him, and said, ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many\*. That is to say, under my dispensation, let princes, and magistrates, and great men, after my example, approve their superiority by the important services they do to mankind. And whoever have abused their power to fill their own coffers, and to exert a vain superiority, and shall begin to smite their fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken: the Lord of these servants shall come in a day when they look not for him; and in an hour that they are not aware of; and shall cut them asunder, and appoint them their portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth†.*

5. The talents I have already mentioned, viz. knowledge, parts, riches, and power, are bestowed only upon some; but what I am about to mention, is, by the goodness of God to us in this country, universally bestowed upon all men, namely the revelation of his grace.

And

\* Matt. xx. 25, &c. † Matt. xxiv. 49, &c.

And this is in truth the most important one of all. For though natural knowledge be a very great advantage, and the law of nature, rightly understood, will teach men the principal duties of religion, yet when we consider the great difficulties men have found in the search after truth, and the very imperfect notions they have had of it at best, we shall see how much happier it is for us, not to be left to make these discoveries ourselves, but to have a revelation so plain that they who run may read it: wherein our duty is laid before us in such an easy light that no one can be ignorant of it, but by the false glosses of men of ignorant or vicious minds. And not only the principles of truth, and the rules of our behaviour are so plainly mentioned, but the helps it promises are so very great, that a man must be very blind to his own interest that will not conform thereto. An advantage we enjoy beyond many other nations of the earth; nay, beyond many who profess themselves of the same religion, and to be disciples of the same master. For, we have his religion genuine and uncorrupted; while others, and much the greatest part of Christendom, have so disguised it, obliterating many of its most important doctrines, fallying, nay very often eradicating, its purest precepts, and mixing so many senseless, absurd and inconsistent inventions with it, destroying its very intent and purpose, that it is very great indulgence to allow them to pass by the name of Christ.

And this is an advantage of such high importance, that though St. Matthew has given us the parable in the general sense in which  
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I have considered it, of all the talents we enjoy, and has added it as a reason of that precept our Saviour had just before laid down, *Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh*; yet our translators seem inclined to confine it to this of the gospel, by adding to it *the kingdom of heaven* is as a man travelling to a far country. But the truth is, the sum and substance, the whole of religion consists in a faithful improvement of all our talents.

And this representation of the good things we enjoy, as put into our hands by a master for his use and service, that is to say, to be subservient to the scheme of Providence his infinite wisdom has dictated, if rightly attended to, would make men extremely cautious how in any case whatsoever they made their own will and pleasure a law to them. For alas! we have not any one thing that we can call our own: but *are bought with a price, and are therefore to glorify God in our bodies and our spirits which are God's* \*. And though it is a very just question which he is represented to ask in the gospel, *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own* †? and he is, as the Apostle speaks, as *a potter that hath power over his clay to make one vessel to honour and another to dishonour* ‡; yet no mortal man, whether he be in dishonour, or in honour, is any thing better than the mere clay of that potter; and it is not lawful for him to do any thing but for the improvement of his master's money. And this is strongly pointed out to us in the master's answer to the unprofitable servant,

*Thou*

\* 1 Cor. vi. 20. † Matt. xx. 15. ‡ Rom. ix. 21.



*Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury.*

And this relation which we stand in to the Supreme Being, is by no means a mortifying, but a very pleasing consideration. For it appears by the text that we serve a very generous beneficent master, who will bestow upon us a very rich reward for our labour. *His Lord said unto him, well done thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

II. The wisdom and benefit of such improvement will appear, if we would consider the contrast between two persons; one advanced to be a ruler over cities, full of joy and delight, delivered from all anxiety about his future situation, and relishing such a state of ease the more, because he had formerly known what care, and trouble, and anxiety were, and assured that he can never fall from the state of grandeur and magnificence he is in: and of another that heretofore had the same views and hopes, if he would but have taken that pains which the prospect of rule and government would have very much softened and alleviated, if not made pleasant and delightful; but chusing rather sloth and inglorious ease, and to spend his time in frolic and merriment; in which condition he is found by his master, called to account, has nothing to say for himself, but saucily to arraign his master's justice, and stand obstinate and stubborn; for which he is immediately deprived of every thing he enjoyed, and thrown into a prison to remain  
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for life, and to know no comfort, no not even of the light of day: if, I say, we would consider such a happy, and such a forlorn condition, and compare them together; we shall soon see, whether it be not worth while to be faithful over a few talents, that so we may be made rulers over many things, and admitted into the joy of our Lord: or, whether it is better to hide our talents in the earth, and to lead lazy and indolent lives, and in a little time *to be cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.* The intent of which sensible representations, is, to teach us, that the good and faithful servants of God, as they have been described, shall be rewarded with eternal life in heaven; but that the wicked shall be punished with *everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power* \*.

III. From what has been said, we see what the true state and condition of this world is, namely, a state of trial and probation for another, and in what manner that trial is made. The design of the creation of man is to raise him by degrees to perfection; and so we find the future life called *the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, where are God the judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect* †; and the nature of that perfection is described, by *being perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect* ‡. Now we see, by the talents which have been mentioned, how we may become so. Being perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect, is elsewhere called *being*

\* 2 Thes. i. 9. † Heb. xii. 23. ‡ Matt. v. 48.



*ing merciful* \*, which implies the highest degree of goodness, *even as he is merciful*. And it is, that we may become so, that God has given to any of us knowledge, parts, riches and power; every one of which must be, and we have seen as we have gone along how they may be, improved, applied, and communicated, in acts of goodness to our fellow-creatures. He that communicates his knowledge, or any advantage of his knowledge to others, resembles the wisdom of God; he that communicates his riches resembles the loving-kindness and providence of God; and he that employs his power to defend the innocent, relieve the oppressed, and adjust the differences between others, resembles him as the sovereign, the governor, and judge of the world. And all the precepts of the gospel are of such a kind as tend to answer that very purpose: insomuch that St. Peter calls it *the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature* †.

It would be unworthy the impartiality of God toward his creatures, to give to one riches while he left another poor, if it was not that the rich man might communicate of his riches to his neighbour: and so of the rest. Nay, even poverty and other afflictions help to carry on the same end, as the poor man is thereby induced to communicate his labour and service to the rich, without which the rich man would not be able, with all his riches, so much as to support himself. Nay, there is no man, till

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\* Luke vi. 36.

† 2 Pet. i. 4.



he is worn out by age and infirmity, but has something or other to communicate for the good of others; and even then, he is the instrument of good to others by the opportunity it gives them of imitating the mercy of *their Father which is in heaven* toward him. So that every man may, and the whole business of his life is in his situation, to subserve the scheme of providence God has laid down, and the system of virtue he has established, of which the end is not yet, but it is to be compleated and perfected in the future life.

And when this is called a state of trial, it is not to be understood as if God wanted to try us so, as if he could not otherwise know whether we were fit for future happiness or not: but it is called so with relation only to ourselves and to the day of judgment: when the justice of our sentence will be manifested before all the holy angels, and the universal assembly of all men that ever had talents to occupy upon the face of this earth: as we shall be approved or condemned, according as we have improved them, or hid them in the earth, or abused them.

Let us all then seriously consider the true state of our condition, and let those who are faithfully improving their talents, whatever they be, look forward with joy and pleasure to the reward, which will so infinitely exceed their fidelity: for though it is only *a few things* we can be faithful in, we are to be made rulers over *many things* — And let those who hitherto have hid their talents, or abused them, be very thankful to God, that the time of their trial is not yet over, but there is yet space

for repentance. And let them use their utmost diligence to redeem the time they have hitherto wasted, and it will not yet be too late ; for God is represented in Scripture as *waiting to be gracious*, and as never shutting his ears to the cries of any sincere penitent. But if, when they have space given them to repent, they will not repent, but have their oil to buy, and their lamps to trim, when the bridegroom is coming, those only who are then *ready* shall go in with him to the marriage, and the door will be shut ; and those who come after, will by no means be able to get admittance, but he will answer and say, *verily I say unto you, I know you not. Let us watch therefore, for we know neither the day, nor the hour, wherein the Son of Man cometh* \*.

\* Matt. xxv. 12, 13.

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On Whit-Tuesday.

Preached before the University of Oxford,

By WILLIAM TILLY, D. D. Fellow of Corpus Christi College.

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EPHESIANS, Chap. iv. Ver. 30.

*And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

THERE can be no point of greater necessity, when we once come to have right apprehensions of the nature of the Holy Ghost, and are duly convinced of his mission, and operations in the church of Christ, than to consider with what temper of our souls we must go on to entertain his divine presence, so as not either to drive him from us, or disappoint his sacred residence with us, of the gracious ends to which it was designed. For all the great things which we either believe or can speak concerning him are referred to our practice as their proper end, and it is there they must all terminate, as in their full and ultimate resolution: in as much as God does not require our belief and acknowledgment of this mystery of our faith, to amuse our understandings, or to engage us in nice and subtle speculations, but in order to the better conduct and regulation of our lives.

I have pitched upon these words of the Apostle, as containing the most serious and affectionate



tionate application to this purpose. *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption.*

By the appellation of Holy applied to the Spirit of God in my text, and other places of the Scripture, we are not to understand only his absolute holiness, as he is considered in his own nature, but with a peculiar relation to ourselves; as he is likewise effectually holy, a principle productive of holiness in the members of his church; the great spring and fountain from whence are derived all that grace and virtue, by which the stains of our corrupt nature are cleansed, and by which we are endued with those divine qualities, and that heavenly disposition of mind, whereby we come to resemble God himself in his perfections, and are enabled to conform our actions to his will.

And when we reflect upon the infinite benefits the Holy Spirit communicates to us of this nature, we shall quickly discern the mighty reason the Apostle had to deliver so very strict and solemn a charge to the Ephesians on this occasion; and the strong obligation that lies upon us all to consider it well.

Which that we may be the better able to do, I shall in the first place make it my business to enquire under what notion, and for what reasons, the Holy Spirit of God is here represented by the Apostle as grieved at the sins of men.

Secondly, I shall consider by what particular kinds and degrees of sin he is more especially grieved.

And, Thirdly, I shall endeavour to explain the force, and shew the propriety of the Apostle's argument against our thus grieving him, because we are *sealed by him to the day of redemption*.

And, First, I am to enquire under what notion, and for what reasons the Holy Spirit of God is here represented by the Apostle as grieved at the sins of men. For here, in the very entrance on this argument, I am very sensible of a secret objection that will arise, and meet me. How can God be grieved? Is there passion in the Most High? Is he liable to change and alteration? And if not, with what propriety, or even tolerable sense of words, can we apply to the Holy Spirit an affection, and that of grief too, one of the most troublesome in our nature, a great instance of our present imperfection, and one of the main instruments of our misery? Can he be touched with our infirmities? Can there be weakness in the Almighty? or can grief spring up in the very fountain of joy itself? To which we must answer, that it is sure there cannot, according to the general and ordinary sense of human passions. And therefore, when the Holy Scriptures apply these expressions to Almighty God, we must take care so to qualify the sense of them, as neither to charge his nature with imperfections on the one hand, nor his holy word with insincerity on the other.

Which inconveniencies we may easily avoid this way, by resolving with ourselves, that though there is not any thing of what we properly call passion in the divine nature, yet there is something of a superior and infinitely transcending

scending kind, namely the most strong and vigorous resentments of good or evil in his will, which he can no more suspend or interrupt than he can his very being. For we must take care of the chilling influence of a cold sort of philosophy, which, whilst it pretends to exempt Almighty God from human passions, really deprives him of the proper perfections of his nature, and leaves him an indifferent and unactive being: than which nothing can be a greater derogation from his honour.

For these propensities and inclinations of God's will, though they are more intense and vigorous in themselves, than can be conceived by human thought; and answer to the utmost force, and all the ends of human passions; yet do they not partake of the nature of our passions, for these two reasons: first, because they are the motions of God's will immediately, and cannot reside in any sensitive appetite, (which is the proper seat of human passions) in as much as God's pure and simple nature admits of no composition whatsoever, much less of a material one. And, secondly, because these motions never fluctuate in the least, never rise or fall, ebb or flow, but are standing and regular, coeternal with his nature, and so not liable to the contingencies of time, or the variety of outward accidents.

And so far as grief is a disposition in God's will, and a result of those two original resentments in the divine nature, of that eternal love to the persons of men, as they are his creatures, and of that infinite and irreconcilable abhorrence and detestation of their sins, which are the only hindrance of their happiness; so



far, and in this sense, I apprehend it applicable to the Holy Spirit of God, in these words of the Apostle.

But then we must take care again to understand this so, as that this resentment may be without any diminution or disturbance to God's happiness; for that we know is entirely secure, and founded within himself only; and the reason why grief, even in human passions, is attended with molestation, if we consider rightly, is not from the very passion itself, but from a secret reflection that goes along with it, that what is now the object of our sorrow does or may some way or other affect our well-being. But this we are sure can have no place in God Almighty, who is a self-sufficient and infinitely perfect being.

The Spirit of God therefore is in this sense said to be grieved for the sins of men, because of his infinite and most tender love to our persons, and at the same time his eternal hatred and displeasure at our sins. And the reasons why this expression of his being grieved is peculiarly applied to him, are these that follow:

First, Because upon the account of his more immediate presence with us, and of that nearness of relation which he is pleased to take upon himself toward us, our sins are now become more directly odious and offensive to him.

Secondly, Because we now commit them in contempt of the highest acts, and utmost expressions of infinite love; and cross and disappoint the Holy Spirit of God in his last remedy, whereby

whereby he is pleased to undertake for our recovery.

And, Thirdly, and as a result and consequence from both the former considerations, because by thus ungratefully dealing with him we provoke him to withdraw himself from us, and all the communications of his goodness with him.

And, First, we are said to grieve the Holy Spirit, because, upon the account of his more immediate presence with us, and of the nearness of that relation which he is pleased to take upon himself toward us, our sins are now become more highly odious and offensive to him, as being committed more directly under his eye, and with circumstances of the greatest irreverence toward him. He is pleased, we know, to look upon Christians as his own property, and as peculiarly separated to his honour from the whole bulk of mankind: our *bodies are his temples*; and by virtue of our mystical union with him being joined to the Lord, *we become one spirit* \*, as the Apostle in the highest and noblest strain of divine eloquence expresses himself. By reason of which so very strict an alliance, every sin we now commit, beside its original and natural turpitude, carries in it a fresh and accessory guilt and provocation. *Know ye not*, (says St. Paul) *that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost* †? And how are they so? but by the inhabitation and intimate presence of this divine person within our hearts.

And therefore when we set up the idols of our own foolish lusts and passions in our heart,

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which

\* 1 Cor. vi. 17. † 1 Cor. vi. 19.

which is properly his altar, and bow down ourselves, and serve those vicious inclinations, which we ought to sacrifice in obedience to his will, this must needs be in the highest degree grievous and offensive to him, as being indeed the deepest violation of his honour. For *what concord is there between the Holy Spirit and Belial? or what agreement hath the temple of God with idols\*?*

The Holy Ghost indeed has obliged himself, by virtue of his being our Blessed Saviour's advocate here on earth, to come and abide with us, and not entirely to give us up, and leave us to ourselves, till he sees we will no longer hear his reproof, and are desperately lost to all his counsels. So that we see he has in some measure confined himself to us, and it is by that means become a great deal more in our power to offend and grieve him, in that he has undertaken not to desert us presently, but for a while to strive with our ingratitude: and this, if any thing, should prove an argument upon our ingenuity not to offend him, by taking in his worst enemies, our sins and pollutions, into his awful presence. And if yet we will do so, if we shall treat the Holy Spirit of God with such contempt and insolence, as to provide no better company for him than our bestial inclinations, and vilest lusts, how much must the influence, think we, of such a base unworthy neighbourhood afflict him!

Again, Secondly, we grieve the Holy Spirit of God by our sins, because they are now committed in contempt of the highest and  
last

\* 2 Cor. vi. 16.



last expressions of infinite love; and we thereby cross and disappoint the Holy Spirit in his last remedy, whereby he is pleased to undertake for our recovery. And thus every sin we are now guilty of is in some measure a sin against the Holy Ghost, (though not that peculiarly great and irremissible one) as being acted in despite of all his powerful assistances, in defiance of all his rebukes, and by way of the most ungracious return for infinite kindness.

For under Christ himself, the Holy Spirit is now the great solicitor and mediator with mankind in God's behalf: and though the malice of all our sins in the last result strikes farther, and rebounds upon the Blessed Father, and the Son; yet considering that the Holy Ghost is the immediate minister of God's will on earth, and transacts all the great affairs in the church of Christ, quickening and enlivening the whole; on this account I say, our sins are now directly aimed at him, and would seem to cast the greatest blemish and reflection on his honour; as if he were not faithful to this *great house of God*, and did not supply his servants with that sufficiency of spiritual assistance, which is necessary to answer the great end and design of his mission, and office of mediation with mankind.

So that whilst he pours out all the riches of his grace and love upon us, and finds them all unsuccessful, and no other returns from us but such as we ought to be ashamed to make him, no wonder then if he begin to enter his complaint against us, in the language of the prophet, and appeal to all the world for our ungrateful behaviour: *And now, O inhabitants*

*habitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge I pray you betwixt me and my vineyard : what could have been done to my vineyard that I have not done in it ? wherefore, when I looked it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes\*?* These and many more such expostulations, which we meet with in the Holy Scriptures, are the expressions of grief and concern ; such as imply the utmost unwillingness to deal severely even by those, whom yet by all the wise methods of his goodness he could not reform. The Holy Spirit of God here represents himself as one who would be glad to spare sinners, if he could, and therefore we may be sure it is grievous to him that by their sins they will not suffer him.

And for men thus to disappoint the Holy Spirit of love, for that is his peculiar title as well as nature, to make him thus *wait that he may be gracious* †, and pay attendance on us, through the tedious stages of our folly and vanity ; and to stand by, and be a witness of our despight and disobedience against himself, with the importunate offers of infinite kindness in his hand ; is a practice of that nature, that what man is there of any tenderness or ingenuity in his soul who can bear the harshness of such an ungrateful reflection as this ? It is an argument of God's infinite mercy, that he is pleased only to express himself as grieved at such impiety and baseness. that his anger does not smoke, and his indignation flame out against such sinners, and he consume them in a moment.

But

\* Isa. v. 3, 4.      † Isa. xxx. 18.



But behold, instead of this ; *O the height and depth of the patience and long-suffering of God !* because we have given him so many promises that he should expect better things from us, and he has given us so many powerful motives and reasons why he might, after all his resentments of our contumelies against him, come out to us under the milder style of grief only ; not to consume us for our treacherous baseness, but to convince us of it, and to persuade us from it ! *Who can express the loving kindness of the Lord, or shew forth all his praise ! How unsearchable are his mercies, and his love past finding out !* But let us take care we do not always thus provoke him, and flight his patience.

It was the base proceeding of the Jewish nation to affront, and grieve him, after innumerable experiences of his exceeding mercies toward them, even almost to a degree of fondness, that made infinite love at last turn into bitterness and afflict them : as we find the account described in the holy prophet in the most affectionate and lively manner. And the reason at last given for God's afflicting that people, because after all his infinite love and tenderness toward them, they *rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit, therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them* \*.

And surely, considering the much greater obligations he has laid upon all Christians, whom he has admitted into a state of the highest privileges, and most glorious expectations, we may conclude his resentments of our unworthy behaviour at last will be in proportion

\* Isa. lxiii.



portion to the mercies we have received from his hands, and then, we are sure, they must be infinite.

There is no doubt but God observes and hates the sins of men, wheresoever they are found, and his *wrath abides on every worker of iniquity*, of what denomination soever, according to the measure of his sins; but it is the profane Christian, that *emphatically grieves his Holy Spirit*, which expresses and implies a strange and peculiar degree of baseness in our sins, as well as the guilt of common disobedience; in as much as a man is said to be provoked indeed by the evil turns of his enemy, and to hate him for them, but he is properly grieved at the offences of his friend. And therefore, beside the common and general obligations of duty that lie upon a Christian, the very nearness of relation that we bear to Almighty God, being his children and friends, should, one would think, be a most powerful restraint upon us from evil, and would be so, if we had any thing of that goodness and gratitude in our tempers, that we ought to have.

But if arguments of this nature do not carry force enough in them to keep us from grieving our best and most intimate friend and benefactor, the Holy Spirit of God, let us consider, in the third place, what our grieving of him farther implies, which is, that by this ungrateful dealing with him, we provoke him to remove and withdraw himself from us, and all the communications of his goodness with him.

Now

Now though this seems rather the result and consequence of grief, than any thing of the formal notion of it; yet because in divinity, and when we speak of Almighty God, we are allowed to give the name of the internal disposition to the outward effect produced by it, upon that account the Holy Spirit of God is not improperly said to be grieved, when he deals with men, in a way suitable to that of their dealing with one another, when under the force and influence of that passion. And we are very well acquainted how the act of grieving amongst men is apt to produce offence, regret, and distance: it being one of the first, and most general instincts in our nature, not to associate and unite itself with what is so very disagreeable.

Now whether it is that our sins do by a sort of natural efficacy pollute and stain our souls, and so indispose them for the continued influences of the Holy Spirit, or whether upon our provocations he is pleased to restrain them by way of a judicial consequence, I need not here determine. This is certain, we may forfeit and diminish, and even lose this blessed influx of Divine grace upon our minds; and it is to be hoped that we have all had such a lively sense, and such convictions of these heavenly operations within us, one time or other, as that, when we have been so unhappy as to offend God by our sins, we could easily perceive the change and alteration, that followed in our souls in that dryness, and desolation, and barrenness of spirit, which ensues more especially upon our commission of sins of a greater malignity and wilfulness.



For the common pollutions of our lives, the sins as they are called of daily incurſion, are ſuch, as, by the weakneſs of our preſent nature, it is impoſſible for us wholly to avoid. And therefore the Holy Spirit of God, in theſe caſes, is not pleaſed to take the forfei- ture; but notwithſtanding the little films of corruption which theſe ſins caſt about us, he ſtill continues to ſtream out upon our hearts with ſo vigorous a light from heaven, that no bad influence of this nature can intercept or ſtifle him, but is daily diſſolved and diſſipated by his vigorous rays; as an early cloud and morning-dew, by the heat of the ſun. But then, when our omiſſions or commiſſions grow notorious, when our neglect of ſpiritual improvements runs on, and leaves upon our mind an indiſpoſition to our duty, or when we commit ſins with a high hand, with degrees of malice and defiance to God's will and law, our guilty mind then dares not for ſome time look toward him. The *Bleſſed Spirit goes and returns to his place*\*; he retires and hides himſelf from us, till we ſeek him again with ſorrow, and recover the light of his favour by our repentance.

And the more frequently we commit ſins of this nature and degree of aggravation, ſo in proportion we ſtill weaken the influences of God's grace and Spirit to ourſelves: and though he may indeed forgive us, for what is paſt, as he very frequently does, and be reconciled, as to the final iſſues of our repentance; yet ſuch frequent breaches as theſe will neceſſarily bring on ſome eſtrangement between him

\* Hoſea v. 15.



him and us at present, and our intercourse can never be so cordial, when it is interrupted by such often repeated offences. A man, in like manner, will forgive his friend a great many slips and imprudences, and some wilful transgressions, but to find him frequently affronting him, in the same or greater instances, after all the kindness of admonition too, must necessarily wear off and abate by degrees the firmness of his affection, even to the person that had once the greatest interest in his heart. Because he cannot but conclude, that such a one does not any longer either desire, or deserve to maintain a friendly correspondence with him.

And thus having shewn what is meant by grieving the Holy Spirit, and for what reasons he is more peculiarly said to be grieved by the sins of Christians; I come now in the second place to consider, by what particular kinds and degrees of sins, we may be in a greater measure said to grieve him. And these sins we may in the general resolve to be such, as either at first do totally defeat or disappoint his holy influences of their due force and energy upon our hearts; or come afterward to be in the most downright opposition to his light, and divine assistances. Of the former sort I shall mention only, and that will be sufficient, an habitual inconsideration and inadvertency of mind to the sacred motions and inspirations of the Holy Spirit; and of the latter, sins of presumption in general, with those particular kinds of them, sensuality, malice and spiritual pride; against which the Holy Ghost declares himself to bear the most irre-

concileable averſion ; becauſe theſe are indeed the moſt deſtructive of his great work of ſanctification, which it is the will of God, and his own chief deſign to carry on in the world, for the benefit and happineſs of men's ſouls.

The firſt thing I ſhall mention, as being more eſpecially grievous to the Holy Spirit, is an habitual inconfideration and inadvertence of his holy motions within us. There is a certain peculiar frame and temper of ſoul required, a ſobriety of mind, without which the ſpirit of God cannot, or will not concur to the purification of our corrupt nature : and which it is in our own power, by virtue of his general preventing grace, to form and prepare within ourſelves ; and he expects we ſhould do ſo, it being the ground and foundation, upon which he is to proceed with in his after-workings. Now, this conſiſts in preſerving our minds in a cool and ſerious diſpoſition, in regulating and calming our affections, and calling in and checking the inordinate purſuits of our paſſions after the vanities and pleaſures of this world ; which, that we ſhould do indeed, is of ſuch mighty conſequence to our improvement in holineſs, that if we enquire into the reaſons of mens non-proſiciency under the moſt powerful means of grace which God has given us, we ſhall find it to be chiefly from hence, that men do not look enough within themſelves, they don't obſerve and watch the diſorders and imperfections of their own ſpirits, nor attend with any care to thoſe directions and remedies, that would be continually thrown up upon their thoughts from this fountain of life within them, if they were but ſerious and recollected



recollected enough to give them admittance. Men are generally lost in the hurry and distractions of life, in the business or pleasures of it, and seem to think that their regeneration, their new nature, will spring and grow up within them, with as little care and thought of their own, as the first rudiments of their bodies were formed within *the bowels of their mother* \*.

Whereas there is nothing more certain, than that the Holy Spirit of God does not ordinarily co-operate to the reformation of our nature, but by taking into his concurrence our own thoughtfulness and careful attendance to his operations: which are generally lost upon us, whilst, in the prophet's language, we *scatter our ways* †, we squander and throw away our hearts upon varieties of folly that affect us, and leave that one thing needful, a due care of our spiritual improvements, quite neglected.

There is many a man, that, for the main of his life, is regular and orderly in his conversation, and generally observes the seasons of outward discipline, of fasting and prayer, with some care; who yet in the intervals of these duties gives too great a loose to his thoughts, and affections, and discourse, and seems to adjourn the great business of his duty to the next hour of his devotion: whereas they are indeed these vacancies and intervals from his immediate attendance upon his duty, that are the great and proper opportunities of improvement; by observing himself, and comparing the gradual increases of his spiritual strength, and by stifling and subduing every irregular thought

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\* Psa. lxxi. 6.

† Jer. xiii. 13.



and motion that stirs within his breast. And if these persons, whom yet we may and must in equity and charity term good men, lose so much in their spiritual estate, for want of better adjusting and balancing their accounts; what then must we think of others, who forfeit all, by scarce ever bestowing a serious thought upon themselves, and their own conduct in their lives? Surely there is not any temper of mind less a friend to a spirit of religion, than a thoughtless, light and inconsiderate one; that, by the continual succession and transport and hurry of vain affections, excludes every thing that is serious from an admission to the soul, and from leaving those impressions there, which should influence the life and outward actions. So that I could almost venture to say that a man were better be guilty of a single act of wilful sin, than to lie generally under this slumber of spirit, this supineness, this lethargy of soul. Because the guilt of the former is so very open and importunate, that a man of any principles can have no rest in his spirit, till he is in some hopeful way of recovery by an after-repentance. Whereas the latter perceives not its own danger, and so goes on without conviction; and the consequence quite defeats and frustrates all the blessed means of restoration. And if we measure the grief and concern of the Holy Spirit at the sins of men, from the degrees of his frustration and disappointment, we may conclude there is no state of mind, that he is less pleased with, unless it be that of an hardened, daring, presumptuous offender.

Which

Which was the second sort and degree of sins, that I am to consider as in the highest manner offensive to the Holy Spirit of God.

An inconsiderate inadvertent mind will not be at the pains to see the light, but a bold presumptuous sinner sees it clearly, and hates it, and tries to put it out. The former offends by his carelessness, the latter by direct hatred and opposition. Such a one is the professed enemy of God, comes up to a close engagement, and, as holy Job expresses it, runs *upon his neck, and upon the thick bosses of his buckler* \*.

And herein lies the heinous guilt and aggravation of this sort of sins above those of ignorance and infirmity; that whereas these two suppose a defect, the one in the understanding, the other in the passions: the sin of presumption, in the mean time, includes in it all the malice of wilfulness and rebellion; when a man is not ignorant, and is not surprized, but knowingly and resolutely goes against the express declarations of God's word, and the lively, full, and intimate convictions of his own mind and conscience. So that this is the very measure and standard of iniquity, and all other sins, of what kind soever, take their several distinctions of more, or less guilty from, their nearer approach to, or greater distance from, sins of this nature and denomination. In as much as these imply the greatest opposition to God's will, contempt of his holiness, and defiance of his justice. *Because thou hast despised me*, was the black stile, under which God by the prophet taxed the murder and

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adultery

\* Job, xv. 26.

adultery of David ; as having no character worse than that, by which he could express so foul a revolt. And for us to contemn, and do despight to the Spirit of grace, which is the true interpretation of all sins of this quality, if any thing can do so, must surely grieve him, not only as to the inward resentment and disposition of his will toward such sinners, but as the utmost consequences of his outward dealing with them, his retiring from them, and forsaking them, in proportion to their guilt.

Other sins, that have yet some allay in their nature, and somewhat to plead in their excuse, as sins of ignorance and infirmity, do yet in some measure weaken and diminish his gracious presence with us, and cast a cloud for a while upon the light of his favour toward us. But the ill consequence of these sins, through God's mercy, and our own careful endeavours, may, if they are taken in time, be more easily repaired ; in as much as our will, though under a bruise, in such a case, retains yet some disposition to the grace of God, as a newly extinguished taper does to light. But our acts of presumptuous sins, more especially if repeated, quite break off the staff of our spiritual strength, smother and extinguish the remains of life within us for a while, and leave us senseless and groveling in our own pollutions. And if we recover again, it is with pangs and convulsions of mind, and like the travail of a new birth, till another nature be formed within us.

This indeed is the condition and consequence of all presumptuous sins in general. But  
then



then there are some particular sins of this nature and distinction, that besides the formal notion of presumption, which is common to them with the rest, do yet, by a more direct and malignant influence of their own, make havock of our spiritual estate, as they are presumptuous sins of such a particular kind and constitution. Such for instance, as those I mentioned, sensuality, malice, and spiritual pride; which, that they do more especially grieve the Holy Spirit, we may be well assured, when we only remember that they are the blackest characters of a carnal mind, which we know is downright enmity with God himself; and because they directly oppose and contradict the Holy Ghost in those graces of purity, love, and humility, which he sets the highest value on himself, and which he most carefully endeavours to promote and advance in men's hearts, as the greatest instances of our holiness, and the main conditions of our happiness. But as I have not now time to take a more particular view of these, I shall leave the more thorough consideration of them therefore to your own thoughts; and proceed,

In the third and last place, to explain the force, and shew the propriety of the Apostle's argument against our grieving the Holy Spirit, because we *are sealed by him to the day of redemption.*

By the *day of redemption* may be meant in general the time of our entrance upon our eternal and unchangeable state of happiness in another world; whether at our leaving these bodies, in the hour of death, or our resuming them afterward at the general resurrection:

tion: though I should rather chuse to understand them in the latter of these senses, because we find the Apostle uses the same term in another place, where we are certain he speaks of the resurrection in these words, *waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our bodies* \*. And it is to this *day of redemption* that we are consigned by the *seal of the Holy Spirit* these three ways.

First, In that by the efficacy of his grace we receive his real stamp and impress upon our souls, and are made *partakers of the divine nature*, and become meet and qualified for the enjoyment of *the inheritance of the saints in light* †.

Secondly, Because we receive him as a sign and mark of God's propriety in us, that we belong to Christ, and as a condition and security, by God's appointment, of our future happiness.

And, Thirdly, We receive him as the earnest, and assurance to our own private spirits, that we have a title to eternal life and happiness, and shall not fail of it, if we persevere to do his will; because the *Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God* ‡.

These are the most remarkable uses of a seal, and the chief relations that it bears; and though, by the help of a good invention and fancy, a man might possibly discover more, yet I believe they would be such only, as are involved in those I have already mentioned, or coincident with them. These however, that I have before described, I am sure are clearly  

expressed



expressed in, or plainly deducible from, the Holy Scriptures, and that shews them to be most pertinent to my present subject.

And, first, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God, in that by the power and efficacy of his grace we take a real stamp and impress from him upon our souls, being made partakers of the divine nature, and rendered meet and qualified for the inheritance of the saints in light. For this indeed is the main end of the Holy Spirit's dwelling with us, to rectify the disorderly motions of our souls, to heal our inward distempers, and to restore that image of himself upon our nature, which is so far lost by our original and actual corruptions. And truly unless our spirits are in some measure thus reformed, and set right, and delivered from under those pollutions into which we are sunk, it is impossible there should be the least communion between him and us whatever. For our similitude to him is the only ground and foundation of our fellowship with him; for what *communion is there between light and darkness?* and if we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth \*. So that it is only by the renewal of our minds that we are made after the *image of him that created us* †; and thus by representing him in that image we are still more susceptible of his influences, and by means of a friendly and daily intercourse with him, we are more and more transformed into his likeness, till we are satisfied with it.

Nor is this representation of his purity and holiness in ourselves required only as an arbitrary condition

\* 1 John i. 6.      † Col. iii. 10.



condition of our gracious correspondence with the Holy Spirit; but is absolutely necessary likewise in its nature, as a state and temper of soul really qualifying and disposing us for spiritual happiness. For if there should be no suitableness in nature and disposition between God and us, how is it possible then, his happiness should be ours, if ours must consist, as it does, in the contemplation and love of his perfections? so that there does not appear the least ground of reason why some men should question, as they do, whether holiness of life, and purity of heart, be necessary not only as a stated condition, but as a natural qualification for our future happiness; if we allow only this one supposition, which surely is a very reasonable one, that a likeness and enjoyment must require a similitude of nature and inclination: which is a proposition that seems to me so very clear, as not to be capable of any proof more evident than itself.

But now, a conformity of will and affections to the will of God is what we mean, when we speak of holiness as it is in men; and to produce this is the proper end and design of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, and therein consists all the image and resemblance of him that we are represented as capable of in the Holy Scriptures. For, by his sacred presence with us, we are not more nearly united to his nature and being than we were before, but by virtue of that presence, we receive from him a more immediate virtue, and a greater fullness of heavenly influences. He communicates to us, and we derive from him, *grace for grace*\*; we take such characters and features of resemblance into our spirits, as correspond to the original patterns

\* John i. 16.

patterns of holiness and perfection within himself; and thus we are sealed by him in the first sense, by way of preparation and order to the day of our redemption, the happiness he designs us in a future state.

And since we are so, and the new nature that is wrought within us grows up under the forming power of his hands; what do we, when we grieve him by our sins, but unravel and destroy his works, set him back in his designs, by breaking down those piles and fences which he had been hitherto raising against the overflowings of our natural corruption, and so at last entirely defeat him in his gracious methods and counsels for our salvation?

Secondly, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit in order to our redemption, in that we receive him as a sign and mark of God's propriety in us that we belong to Christ, and as a condition and security, by the divine appointment of our future happiness; since God is pleased to admit none for his children, but those that have received the *spirit of his Son in their hearts*. And then, we are sure, *if we are not children, neither can we be heirs, either heirs with God, or joint-heirs with Christ*\*; which is the strong reverse of the Apostle's argument in his Epistle to the Romans.

But now, if the Spirit of Christ dwell in us, by that we shall be known hereafter, and distinguished from others, as we are at present consigned over, in the most proper sense of that word, to our own redemption. For, as the Apostle reasons in the same chapter, *If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell*

\* Rom. viii. 17.



*dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his spirit that dwelleth in you* \*.

From hence then it appears that the Holy Spirit within us is the mark and character which God sets upon his servants, appropriating them to himself. And in whomsoever he finds it, when he comes to reckon with the world for their transgressions, he will pass over that man, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in and hurt him. I cannot better express this than in the language of the prophet Malachi to this very purpose of my text, where speaking of those that feared God's name, he says, *and they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. In the day when I make up my jewels* †, that is, when I set my seal and mark of appropriation, as Dr. Hammond very well observes in his Exposition on the very words of my text.

But now, if the Holy Spirit be thus the seal, the sign and security of our salvation, then by grieving and provoking him by our sins, we break up this seal with our own hands, we cancel our firmest security, and, as much as in us lies, reverse our own title to eternal life. And I think nothing more than that either can, or need be said, to convince us of the extreme danger and evil of such a practice.

Thirdly, and to conclude all, beside that the Holy Spirit within us is a firm security and condition in the nature of the thing itself, and by God's appointment of our title to eternal life, he is likewise an earnest within our hearts, and  
a par-

\* Rom. viii. 11.

† Mal. iii. 7.



a particular assurance to our own private spirits, that we shall not fail of our Salvation, if we go on to please him ; because *the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God* \*.

And this inward testimony of our mind is very different from that outward one in his word, which latter may be eternally true, that he that has the spirit of God shall live for ever, and yet many a particular man may not have that assurance, and that immediate application of this general truth to himself : so that though this private testimony of our own mind proceed upon the ground, and is formed according to the direction of God's word without, yet that it shall be lively and effectual to our comfort, depends upon the secret operation of his spirit within : who, by infusing his heavenly consolations into our souls, by quickening and enlivening our drooping spirits, and giving us a high and spiritual gust and relish of his promises, raises bright and joyous resentments within us, and makes a man almost anticipate the bliss to which he is going. In this sense God is said by the Apostle to the Corinthians to *have sealed us, and to have given the earnest of the spirit in our hearts* †. And that earnest not only by way of confirmation of our title to happiness, but as an actual part of the reward itself at present, the fullness and completion of which we expect hereafter.

\* Rom. viii. 16.

† 2 Cor. i. 22.

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## On Trinity Sunday.

By DEAN SWIFT.

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I JOHN, Chap. v. Ver. 7.

*For there are three that bear record in Heaven,  
the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost;  
and these three are one.*

THIS day being set apart to acknowledge our belief in the eternal Trinity, I thought it might be proper to employ my present discourse entirely upon that subject; and I hope to handle it in such a manner, that the most ignorant among you may return home better informed of your duty in this great point, than probably you are at present.

It must be confessed, that by the weakness and indiscretion of busy (or at best, of well-meaning) people, as well as by the malice of those who are enemies to all revealed religion, and are not content to possess their own infidelity in silence, without communicating it to the disturbance of mankind; I say by these means, it must be confessed, that the doctrine of the Trinity hath suffered very much, and made christianity suffer along with it. For these two things must be granted: first, That men of wicked lives would be very glad there were no truth in Christianity at all; and secondly, if they can pick out any one single article in the Christian religion which appears not agreeable to their own corrupted reason, or to the arguments of those bad people, who follow the trade of seducing

ducing others, they presently conclude that the truth of the whole gospel must sink along with that one article; which is just as wise, as if a man should say, because he dislikes one law of his country, he will therefore observe no law at all; and yet that one law may be very reasonable in itself, although he does not allow it, or does not know the reason of the lawgivers.

Thus it hath happened with the great doctrine of the Trinity; which word is indeed not in Scripture, but was a term of art invented in the earliest times to express the doctrine by a single word, for the sake of brevity and convenience. The doctrine then, as delivered in Holy Scripture, though not exactly in the same words, is very short, and amounts only to this, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are each of them God, and yet that there is but one God. For, as to the word Person, when we say there are three persons; and as to those other explanations in the Athanasian Creed this day read to you (whether compiled by Athanasius or no) they were taken up three hundred years after Christ, to expound this doctrine; and I will tell you upon what occasion. About that time there sprang up a heresy of a people called Arrians, from one Arrius the leader of them. These denied our Saviour to be God, although they allowed all the rest of the Gospel (wherein they were more sincere than their followers among us.) Thus the Christian world was divided into two parts, till at length, by the zeal and courage of St. Athanasius, the Arrians were condemned in a general council, and a creed formed upon the true faith, as St. Athanasius hath settled it. This creed is now read



at certain times in our churches, which although it is useful for edification to those who understand it, yet since it contains some nice and philosophical points which few people can comprehend, the bulk of mankind is obliged to believe no more than the Scripture-doctrine, as I have delivered it. Because that creed was intended only as an answer to the Arrians in their own way, who were very subtil disputers.

But this heresy having revived in the world about an hundred years ago, and continued ever since; not out of a zeal to truth, but to give a loose to wickedness, by throwing off all religion; several divines, in order to answer the cavils of those adversaries to truth and morality, began to find out farther explanations of this doctrine of the Trinity, by rules of philosophy; which have multiplied controversies to such a degree, as to beget scruples that have perplexed the minds of many sober Christians, who otherwise could never have entertained them.

I must therefore be so bold to affirm, that the method taken by many of those learned men to defend the doctrine of the Trinity, hath been founded upon a mistake.

It must be allowed, that every man is bound to follow the rules and directions of that measure of reason which God hath given him; and indeed he cannot do otherwise if he will be sincere, or act like a man. For instance: If I should be commanded by an angel from heaven, to believe it is midnight at noon-day; yet I could not believe him. So if I were directly told in Scripture, that *three are one*, and *One is three*, I could not conceive or believe it in the natural common sense of that expression, but  
must

must suppose that something dark or mystical was meant, which it pleased God to conceal from me and from all the world. Thus in the text, *There are three that bear record, &c.* Am I capable of knowing and defining what union and what distinction there may be in the divine nature? which possibly may be hid from the angels themselves. Again, I see it plainly declared in Scripture that there is but one God; and yet I find our Saviour claiming the prerogative of God in knowing men's thoughts; in saying *he and his Father are one*; and, *before Abraham was, I am*. I read, that the disciples worshiped him: that Thomas said to him, *My Lord and my God*. And St. John, Chap. 1st, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*. I read likewise that the Holy Ghost bestowed the gift of tongues, and the power of working miracles, which, if rightly considered, is as great a miracle as any; that a number of illiterate men should of a sudden be qualified to speak all the languages then known in the world, such as could be done by the inspiration of God alone! From these several texts it is plain that God commands us to believe there is an union and there is a distinction; but what that union, or what that distinction is, all mankind are equally ignorant, and must continue so, at least till the day of judgement, without some new Revelation.

But because I cannot conceive the nature of this union and distinction in the divine nature, am I therefore to reject them as absurd and impossible, as I would if any one told me that three men are one, and one man is three? We are



told, that a man and his wife are one flesh; this I can comprehend the meaning of; yet, literally taken, it is a thing impossible. But the Apostle tells us, *We see but in part, and we know but in part*; and yet we would comprehend all the secret ways and workings of God.

Therefore I shall again repeat the doctrine of the Trinity, as it is positively affirmed in Scripture: that God is there expressed in three different names, as Father, as Son, and as Holy Ghost; that each of these is God, and that there is but one God. But this union and distinction are a mystery utterly unknown to mankind.

This is enough for any good Christian to believe on this great article, without ever inquiring any farther. And this can be contrary to no man's reason, although the knowledge of it is hid from him.

But there is another difficulty of great importance among those who quarrel with the doctrine of the Trinity, as well as with several other articles of Christianity; which is, that our religion abounds in mysteries, and these they are so bold to revile as cant, imposture, and priest-craft. It is impossible for us to determine for what reasons God thought fit to communicate some things to us in part, and leave some part a mystery. But so it is in fact, and so the Holy Scriptures tell us in several places. For instance: the resurrection and change of our bodies are called mysteries by St. Paul; our Saviour's incarnation is another: the kingdom of God is called a mystery by our Saviour, to be only known to his disciples; so is faith and the word of God by St. Paul: I omit many others.

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So that to declare against all mysteries without distinction or exception, is to declare against the whole tenor of the New Testament.

There are two conditions that may bring a mystery under suspicion. First, when it is not taught and commanded in Holy Writ; or, secondly, when the mystery turns to the advantage of those who preach it to others. Now, as to the first, it can never be said, that we preach mysteries without warrant from Holy Scripture, although I confess this of the Trinity may have sometimes been explained by human invention, which might perhaps better have been spared. As to the second; it will not be possible to charge the Protestant priesthood with proposing any temporal advantage to themselves by broaching or multiplying, or preaching of mysteries. Does this mystery of the Trinity, for instance, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, bring the least profit or power to the preachers? No, it is as great a mystery to themselves as it is to the meanest of their hearers: and may be rather a cause of humiliation, by putting their understanding in that point upon a level with the most ignorant of their flock. It is true indeed, the Roman church hath very much enriched herself by trading in mysteries, for which they have not the least authority from Scripture, and were fitted only to advance their own temporal wealth and grandeur; such as transubstantiation, worshipping of images, indulgences for sins, purgatory, and masses for the dead; with many more: but it is the perpetual talent of those who have ill-will to our church, or a contempt for all religion, taken up by the wickedness of their lives, to charge us with the er-

rors and corruptions of popery, which all Protestants have thrown off near two hundred years; whereas those mysteries held by us have no prospect of power, pomp, or wealth, but have been ever maintained by the universal body of true believers from the days of the Apostles, and will be so to the Resurrection; neither will the gates of hell prevail against them.

It may be thought, perhaps, a strange thing, that God should require us to believe mysteries, while the reason or manner of what we are to believe is above our comprehension, and wholly concealed from us: neither doth it appear at first sight, that the believing or not believing them doth concern either the glory of God, or contribute to the goodness or wickedness of our lives. But this is a great and dangerous mistake. We see what a mighty weight is laid upon faith, both in the Old and New Testament. In the former we read how the faith of Abraham is praised, who could believe that God would raise from him a great nation, at the very same time that he was commanded to sacrifice his only son, and despaired of any other issue. And this was to him a great mystery. Our Saviour is perpetually preaching faith to his disciples, or reproaching them with the want of it; and St. Paul produceth numerous examples of the wonders done by faith. And all this is highly reasonable; for, faith is an entire dependence upon the truth, the power, the justice, and the mercy of God; which dependence will certainly incline us to obey him in all things. So that the great excellency of faith consists in the consequence it hath upon our actions: as if we depend upon the truth and wisdom of a man,

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we shall certainly be more disposed to follow his advice. Therefore, let no man think that he can lead as good a moral life without faith, as with it; for this reason, because he who has no faith, cannot, by the strength of his own reason or endeavours, so easily resist temptations, as the other who depends upon God's assistance in the overcoming his frailties, and is sure to be rewarded for ever in heaven for his victory over them. *Faith*, says the Apostle, *is the evidence of things not seen*. He means, that faith is a virtue by which any thing commanded us by God to believe, appears evident and certain to us, although we do not see, nor can conceive it; because, by faith we entirely depend upon the truth and power of God.

It is an old and true distinction, that things may be above our reason without being contrary to it. Of this kind are the power, the nature, and the universal presence of God, with innumerable other points. How little do those who quarrel with mysteries, know of the commonest actions of nature? The growth of an animal, of a plant, or of the smallest seed, is a mystery to the wisest among men. If an ignorant person were told that a load-stone would draw iron at a distance, he might say it was a thing contrary to his reason, and could not believe before he saw it with his eyes.

The manner whereby the soul and body are united, and how they are distinguished, is wholly unaccountable to us. We see but one part, and yet we know we consist of two; and this is a mystery we cannot comprehend, any more than that of the Trinity.

From



From what hath been said, it is manifest, that God did never command us to believe, nor his ministers to preach, any doctrine which is contrary to the reason he hath pleased to endow us with; but for his own wise ends has thought fit to conceal from us the nature of the thing he commands; thereby to try our faith and obedience, and encrease our dependence upon him.

It is highly probable, that if God should please to reveal unto us this great mystery of the Trinity, or some other mysteries in our holy religion, we should not be able to understand them, unless he would at the same time think fit to bestow on us some new powers or faculties of the mind, which we want at present, and are reserved till the day of resurrection to life eternal. *For now, as the Apostle says, we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.*

Thus, we see, the matter is brought to this issue; we must either believe what God directly commands us in Holy Scripture, or we must wholly reject the Scripture, and the Christian religion which we pretend to profess: But this, I hope, is too desperate a step for any of us to make.

I have already observed, that those who preach up the belief of the Trinity, or of any other mystery, cannot propose any temporal advantage to themselves by so doing. But this is not the case of those who oppose these doctrines.

Do they lead better moral lives than a good Christian? are they more just in their dealings? more chaste, or temperate, or charitable? Nothing at all of this; but on the contrary, their intent is to overthrow all religion, that they may gratify their vices without any reproach from the world,

world, or their own conscience ; and are zealous to bring over as many others as they can to their own opinions ; because it is some kind of imaginary comfort to have a multitude on their side.

There is no miracle mentioned in Holy Writ, which, if it were strictly examined, is not as much contrary to common reason, and as much a mystery, as this doctrine of the Trinity ; and therefore we may with equal justice deny the truth of them all. For instance : it is against the laws of nature, that a human body should be able to walk upon the water, as St. Peter is recorded to have done ; or that a dead carcase should be raised from the grave after three days, when it began to corrupt ; which those who understand anatomy will pronounce to be impossible by the common rules of nature and reason. Yet these miracles, and many others, are positively affirmed in the Gospel ; and these we must believe, or give up our holy religion to Atheists and Infidels.

I shall now make a few inferences and observations from what hath been said.

First, it would be well if people would not lay so much weight on their own reason in matters of religion, as to think every thing impossible and absurd which they cannot conceive. How often do we contradict the right rules of reason in the whole course of our lives ? Reason itself is true and just, but the reason of every particular man is weak and wavering, perpetually swayed and turned by his interests, his passions, and his vices. Let any man but consider when he hath a controversy with another, though his cause be ever so unjust, though the



whole world be against him, how blinded he is by the love of himself, to believe that right is wrong, and wrong is right, when it makes for his own advantage. Where is then the right use of his reason which he so much boasts of, and which he would blasphemously set up to controul the commands of the Almighty?

Secondly, when men are tempted to deny the mysteries of religion, let them examine and search into their own hearts, whether they have not some favourite sin which is of their party in this dispute, and which is equally contrary to other commands of God in the Gospel. For, why do men love darkness rather than light? The Scripture tells us, *because their deeds are evil*; and there can be no other reason assigned. Therefore when men are curious and inquisitive to discover some weak sides in Christianity, and inclined to favour every thing that is offered to its disadvantage, it is plain they wish it were not true, and those wishes can proceed from nothing but an evil conscience; because, if there be truth in our religion, their condition must be miserable.

And therefore, thirdly, men should consider that raising difficulties concerning the mysteries in religion, cannot make them more wise, learned, or virtuous; better neighbours, or friends, or more serviceable to their country; but, whatever they pretend, will destroy their inward peace of mind, by perpetual doubts and fears arising in their breasts. And, God forbid we should ever see the times so bad, when dangerous opinions in religion will be a means to get favour and preferment; although even in such a case it would be an ill traffic, to gain the world,



world, and lose our own souls. So that upon the whole it will be impossible to find any real use toward a virtuous or happy life, by denying the mysteries of the Gospel.

Fourthly. Those strong unbelievers, who expect that all mysteries should be squared and fitted to their own reason, might have somewhat to say for themselves, if they could satisfy the general reason of mankind in their other opinions; but herein they are miserably defective, absurd, and ridiculous; they strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel; they can believe that the world was made by chance; that God doth not concern himself with things below, will neither punish vice, nor reward virtue; that religion was invented by cunning men to keep the world in awe; with many other opinions equally false and detestable, against the common light of nature as well as reason; against the universal sentiments of all civilized nations, and offensive to the ears even of a sober Heathen.

Lastly. Since the world abounds with pestilent books particularly written against the doctrine of the Trinity; it is fit to inform you, that the authors of them proceed wholly upon a mistake: they would shew how impossible it is that three can be one, and one can be three; whereas the Scripture saith no such thing, at least in that manner they would make it: but only that there is some kind of unity and distinction in the divine nature, which mankind cannot possibly comprehend. Thus the whole doctrine is short and plain, and in itself incapable of any controversy; since God himself hath pronounced the fact, but wholly concealed the manner. And therefore many divines who thought fit to  
answer

answer those wicked books, have been mistaken too, by answering fools in their folly; and endeavouring to explain a mystery which God intended to keep secret from us. And as I would exhort all men to avoid reading those wicked books written against this doctrine, as dangerous and pernicious; so I think they may omit the answers, as unnecessary. This I confess will probably affect but few or none among the generality of our congregations, who do not much trouble themselves with books, at least of this kind. However, many who do not read themselves, are seduced by others that do; and thus become unbelievers upon trust, and at second hand; and this is too frequent a case: for which reason I have endeavoured to put this doctrine upon a short and sure foot, levelled to the meanest understanding; by which we may, as the Apostle directs, be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear.

And thus I have done with my subject, which probably I should not have chosen, if I had not been invited to it by the occasion of this season, appointed on purpose to celebrate the mysteries of the Trinity, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, wherein we pray to be kept steadfast in this faith; and what this faith is, I have shewn you in the plainest manner I could. For, upon the whole, it is no more than this: God commands us, by our dependence upon his truth and his holy word, to believe a fact that we do not understand. And this is no more than what we do every day in the works of nature, upon the credit of men of learning. Without faith

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we can do no works acceptable to God; for if they proceed from any other principle, they will not advance our salvation; and this faith, as I have explained it, we may acquire without giving up our senses, or contradicting our reason. May God of his infinite mercy inspire us with true faith in every article and mystery of our holy religion, so as to dispose us to do what is pleasing in his sight; and this we pray through Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, the mysterious incomprehensible one God, be all honour and glory now and for evermore. *Amen.*



## On St. Barnabas's Day.

June 11th.

By Dr. MATTHEW HOLE.

ACTS, Chap. xi. Ver. 22.

*Tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church, which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch; who when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people was added unto the Lord, &c.*

**T**HE saint we remember this day, is St. Barnabas, who was born at Cyprus of Jewish parents, and descended of the Tribe of Levi. He was first called Joses or Joseph, and after surnamed Barnabas, for the consolation he administered to the poor Christians, by selling his estate for their relief; as we read, Acts iv. 36, 37.

He was educated at Jerusalem, where with St. Paul he sat at the feet of the learned Gamaliel; which perhaps occasioned that great friendship and familiarity, that was after between them.

The particular time of his conversion to Christianity, is not certainly known; it is supposed

posed to be a little before St. Paul's conversion, because when St. Paul went up to Jerusalem, and *assayed to join himself to the disciples there, they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple, till Barnabas took him and brought him to the Apostles, and declared unto them the manner of his conversion, how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him; and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus* \*.

He is generally affirmed to be one of the seventy disciples chosen by our Saviour, giving an early proof of his love to him, by comforting and relieving his distressed members.

The Collect for the day makes mention of the singular gifts of the Holy Ghost, with which he was endowed; withal teaching us to pray for a competent measure of the like gifts, and likewise for grace to use them always to God's honour and glory.

The Epistle for the day, of which I am now to speak, gives us some account of St. Barnabas's first employment in the service of the church; which is ushered in with these words: *tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church, which was in Jerusalem; and they sent Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.* The tidings here referred to, were St. Peter's free converse with, and preaching unto the Gentiles, which news was brought from Antioch to Jerusalem, an account whereof was briefly this.

St. Peter, who was the Apostle of the circumcision, and preached only to the Jews, was warned of God in a vision, not to account the Gentiles common and unclean, but freely to eat  
and



and converse with them; thereby perceiving (as himself declares) *that God was no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.* Accordingly finding that Cornelius and many other of the Gentiles believed in the Lord Jesus, and received the Holy Ghost, as well as the Jews; he preached to them, and commanded them to be *baptized in the name of the Lord.*

Hereupon many of the brethren of the circumcision took great offence, and contended with St. Peter about this freedom, till he had declared unto them the heavenly vision, whereby his commission was enlarged, and how he was ordered to converse with and preach unto the Gentiles. At which *they held their peace, ceased their contention, and glorified God, who had to the Gentiles also granted repentance unto life;* as we read at large in this chapter.

This was the news or *tidings that came to the ears of the church that was at Jerusalem,* how God had prospered the preaching of the Gospel, and brought in daily many converts among the Gentiles, who *believed in Christ, and turned unto the Lord.*

Whereupon the Apostles, who where then at Jerusalem, *sent forth Barnabas, to go and confirm them from city to city, as far as Antioch;* who when he came there, and saw the grace of God, was glad. Where by the grace of God is meant the Gospel, which is often so stiled in the New Testament; the preaching thereof being an act of the greatest grace and favour that was ever shewed to mankind. And when Barnabas saw the good success of it, he rejoiced greatly



greatly to find what progress the Gospel had made among them, *and exhorted them all with full purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord;* that is, cordially to stick to Christ, and steadfastly to hold fast their faith in him, that nothing might draw them from him.

And here the writer of these acts takes occasion to give a character of St. Barnabas, and to set forth the success of his labours; saying, *He was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith, and much people was added unto the Lord.* He was a good man, one that studied the good of the church, and the welfare of mankind, as appeared by his zeal in propagating Christianity, and his charity in supporting his Christian brethren. Again, *he was full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith;* he was endued with many excellent gifts and graces of the Spirit, with wisdom, and knowledge, and the fear of God, abounding in faith and piety, and in the work of the Lord. And this his labour was not in vain in the Lord, for by his means *much people was added unto the Lord.* He made many converts to Christianity, and brought great numbers to believe and receive the Gospel; he was called to the converting and confirming the Gentile world.

And because this work was too great for a single hand, *Barnabas departed to Tarsus to seek for Saul,* to engage him to join with him for the accomplishing of so great a work: to which end they both returned again to Antioch, where they laboured together a whole year in the establishment of that church; for they frequently *assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people,* instructing and confirming

confirming all that came to them. And when both Jews and Gentiles promiscuously received the Gospel, they became alike the disciples of Christ, and being all united into one body of the church, they were united in one name too.

*And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch*; where the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile being broken down, and both admitted into one fold, under one shepherd and bishop of our souls, all names of distinction were taken away, and they became *all one in Christ Jesus*. This is implied in the new name of Christians then given to them, who were before called disciples, believers, and brethren, and by their enemies Nazarenes and Galileans. But here they were all stiled Christians, which name is continued among us to this day.

We find a prophecy in Isaiah, that *when the Gentiles should come in and see the righteousness of God, all kings should behold their glory, and they should be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord should name*\*. This prophecy is supposed to have been fulfilled at this time, when *the disciples were all called Christians first in Antioch*; at which time this new name was first given both to Jews and Gentiles, who by this divine signature were both marked up for Christ's flock.

But how was this new name given? why, that we may well think was not by chance, nor in any common or ordinary way, for then the Holy Scripture would not have taken such notice of it; but by some divine impulse and direction: for the new name mentioned by Isaiah was such as *the mouth of the Lord should name*; meaning,

\* Isa. lxii. 2.



meaning, that it should be dictated by him, or be ordered and directed by his Holy Spirit.

This some have thought to be implied in the word here used in the original, which is not ἐκαλεῖτο, but χρηματίσαν, which signifies not an ordinary way of naming a thing, but the doing of it in a divine and oracular manner; and gives us to understand, that this name of Christian was not given upon a common or slight occasion, but for weighty reasons, and by God's own appointment.

But to go on with the Epistle for the day, the next word tells us, that *in those days came prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch*; that is, some chief pastors, possibly bishops of Judea, that had the gift of prophecy, were ordered to come there by the church at Jerusalem, to settle some matters.

These prophets and teachers, during their stay at Antioch, were to ordain elders, and set in order things that were wanting; and one day *as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said unto them, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them*: that is, they were either by a revelation from God, or by some secret impulse of his Holy Spirit, commanded to ordain or consecrate Barnabas and Saul to the Apostleship, to which God had already designed them. *And when they had fasted, and prayed, and laid their hands on them* (a ceremony used in conferring of orders ever since) *they sent them away* \*. And being thus sent forth by the Holy Ghost, they went first to Seleucia, and from thence to Cyprus, the native country of St. Barnabas, where

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they

\* Acts xiii.



they preached the word of God with good success, and did many wonderful works for its confirmation. At Paphos, a city in that island, one Sergius Paulus, deputy of the country, a prudent man, hearing of Barnabas and Saul, called for them, *and desired to hear from them the word of God*; but Elymas a forcerer, then with him, *withstood the Apostles, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith*. At which Saul, who was also called Paul, moved by the Holy Ghost, *set his eyes upon him*, and after a sharp rebuke, with a look of his countenance, struck him with blindness; which when the deputy saw, *he believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord*, as we read in that chapter.

From Paphos they went to Perga, in Pamphylia, where Mark their kinsman and companion left them, being discouraged by the dangers they met with in their travels: from whence, by a persecution raised against them, they departed, and came to Iconium and Lystra; where finding *an impotent cripple, that had been lame from his mother's womb, and never had walked*; and perceiving *he had faith to be healed*, they with a loud voice said, *stand upright on thy feet*, and upon the bare speaking of those words, he immediately *leaped and walked about*. At the sight hereof the people were astonished, and cried up the Apostles for gods, stiling Barnabas, for the gravity of his countenance and carriage, by the name of Jupiter, their supreme Deity, and Paul, Mercurius, *because he was the chief speaker*; and the people were just ready to do sacrifice unto them, had not the Apostles with much difficulty restrained them, checking their idolatry, and exhorting them to turn from these  
vanities

vanities unto the living God; as you may read, Acts xiv.

After this, there arose some difference between these two great friends and Apostles, Paul and Barnabas; it began with the controversy of imposing the Jewish rites upon the Gentile converts, which Barnabas at first strenuously opposed, and went with Paul to consult the council at Jerusalem, where this matter was determined in favour of the Gentile converts, that this yoke should not be put upon them.

But afterward Barnabas was drawn aside by St. Peter, too far to dissemble and betray this Christian liberty to please the Jews, which St. Paul blamed and reproved in him; whereupon another difference soon arose between them: for these two Apostles having agreed to visit the brethren in every city where they had preached the word of God, and to see how they did, Barnabas determined to take his kinsman John, surnamed Mark, along with them; but Paul thought not fit to take him with them, because he before left them at Pamphylia, and went not on with the work. This contention was so sharp between them, that they parted asunder one from the other; and so Barnabas took Mark and went to Cyprus, and Paul chose Silas and went to the churches of Syria and Cilicia: of these things we read at large in Acts xv. and Gal. ii.

This contest however did, by the wisdom of God's providence, turn to the good and benefit of the church; for by their parting, the doctrine of Christ and the Gospel spread wider, and became more diffusive than if they had continued together. And Mark (as one hath observed)



much amended by St. Paul's reproof, became more constant and diligent in the work of the Gospel: insomuch that St. Paul sent for him, and gave that commendation of him, that *he was profitable to him for the work of the ministry* \*.

But it is time to return to the prophets whom we left at Antioch, where the Epistle for the day tells us of *one of them named Agabus, who stood up, and signified by the Spirit, that there should be great dearth throughout all the world*; meaning, through all the land of Judea, and of the Roman empire, *which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar*. History makes mention of two great dearths in the days of Claudius, within the space of three years, of which this is supposed to be the first and greatest, when the brethren in Judea were reduced to extreme want, and to all the miseries of a severe famine: then it was that *the disciples, every man, according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judea*. The charity of all good Christians was then moved to a liberal contribution, to support them under their great necessities; and this liberal supply or collection, made by the Christians in Antioch, was sent to the elders or chief ministers of Judea, *by the hands of Barnabas and Saul*, whose great care and fidelity herein is here particularly mentioned with honour.

These are the principal passages relating to the life and actions of St. Barnabas, the Saint we celebrate this day. For his writings, we find only one Epistle written by him, which is generally by the ancients ascribed to him, though  
some

\* 2 Tim. iv. 11.



some suppose it spurious, because it is not put in the canon of Scripture.

But I may not conclude the life of this Saint without taking some notice of his death, which is supposed to be at Salamis, a city in the island of Cyprus. The manner of it is said to be this: he was set upon by certain Jews that came from Syria, as he was disputing in the Synagogue against the obligation and continuance of the rites and sacrifices of Moses's law being all fulfilled in Christ; at which they were so highly incensed, that they seized him in the night, and carried him without the city, where they put him to great tortures, and after stoned him to death.

Thus lived and died this eminent Saint and companion of St. Paul, and was buried (as some tell us) by his kinsman Mark, in a cave not far distant from that city.

We have seen some of the singular gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, with which this holy Apostle St. Barnabas was endued; and are taught by the church to pray, that we may not be left destitute of some measure of the said gifts, nor yet of grace, to use them always to God's honour and glory. To which end let us

1. Endeavour to imitate, in some measure, his exceeding great bounty and liberality, in selling all and giving to the poor, which the rich man in the Gospel refused to do, and chose rather to part with his Saviour, than any part of his estate for that purpose; whereas the Saint of this day compassionated the necessities of his fellow Christians, and sent relief to the indigent brethren of Judea, contributing to the wants of the needy, and refreshing the bowels of distressed

faints: which should teach us to go and do likewise.

2. Let us imitate his great zeal and diligence in propagating the faith of Christ. We read of Barnabas and Saul's indefatigable industry in travelling up and down, and scattering the light of the Gospel in dark and distant regions; which should teach us to spare no pains to rescue men from ignorance and error, and to bring them to the knowledge and understanding of divine truths, turning them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God; knowing, that he that turneth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save his soul alive, and shine as the stars in the kingdom of heaven.

3. From the disciples being all united in one name, and called Christians first in Antioch, let us learn to unite together in one bond of peace and love. Both Jew and Gentile were then gathered into one flock, and taken into one fold of the Catholic church; at which time it was thought fit that all former names of distinction should be laid aside, and that they should all have the general name and appellation of Christians, to teach them to keep the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace: and therefore we find St. Paul exhorting the Corinthians, *by the name of Christ, to speak all the same things, that there might be no divisions among them, and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and the same judgment* \*; and not only so, but that they should answer the import and obligation of that holy name, which was to believe and practice what Christ had taught them, to follow his example,

ample, to cleave to him with full purpose of heart, and to depart from all iniquity.

Lastly, from the contest that happened between St. Paul and Barnabas about the Jewish converts, we may learn, that the best men have their failings, that we all here know but in part, and that differences may arise in lesser matters, even among good men; which should make us bear with one anothers infirmities, and avoid as much as possible all contention and strife, longing for that happy time when all these imperfections shall be done away, and we shall be all joined together in one fellowship and communion, singing the praises of our Maker to all eternity: to which blessed state, God of his infinite mercy bring us all, for the merits of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*



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## On the Nativity of St. John the Baptist.

June 24th,

By Dr. ADAM LITTLETON.

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MATTHEW, Chap. iii. Ver. 2.

*Repent ; for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*

THE text is itself a sermon, preached first by the holy martyr of this day, John Baptist, the forerunner and harbinger of our Lord, at the very commencement of the gospel: *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea. And saying, repent ye : for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* This afterward repeated by our Lord himself *in terminis*, when John was cast into prison \*, and by him the same form was continued in the Apostles commission, when he sent them forth to preach † ; accordingly St. Paul gives that account of himself too, that he was made a minister to preach repentance ‡.

And this is to be my business now : for though the several passages of the saint, his midsummer-nativity, his hermitage, his habit of camel hair, (yet not of camlet) his diet locusts, ἀκρίδες, whether grass-hoppers, or tops of herbs his dignity, the greatest, and yet below the least, his ~~1720~~ or baptism, honoured by our Sa-

viour,

\* Mat. iv. 17.

† Mat. x. 7.

‡ Acts xxvi. 20.

viour \*, yet re-baptized by St. Paul †; the character of his doctrine, and lastly his martyrdom: how his courage in reproofing sin, taken notice of in the collect, ruined him at court into bliss, whilst Herod, out of a wickedly tender conscience to a paltry oath ‡, was content the damsel's light heels should spurn off the prophet's head. Though these instances, I say, would afford matter for a learned inquiry and a florid discourse; I shall willingly pass them by, and in compliance rather with the necessity of our sinful times, than with the history of the holy-day, spend my hour in a serious and pious meditation upon repentance; *Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* In which words you have—

1. A duty commended, or, if you will not take it so, a duty commanded. *Repent.*

2. A motive, or argument enforcing that duty. *For the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

The duty, a duty of absolute and indispensable necessity; repentance.

The enforcement as powerful, as the duty is necessary; the near approach of the kingdom of heaven.

1. For the duty. Repentance is reckoned one, and that the first of the six principles or fundamentals of religion §. And thus these words seem to have been dictated by the Holy Spirit purposely for an introduction to the Christian doctrine; repentance being the very inlet, the earliest and most requisite preparative for Christ's coming, and the preaching of the gospel, which are frequently in New Testament stile meant by the *kingdom of heaven*.

In

\* Mat. xi. 11.

‡ Acts xix. 5.

† Mat. xiv. 9.

§ Heb. vi. 1.

In the handling hereof I shall, waving all questions and distinctions of the schools, only take what the very word here used will fairly allow me, μετανοεῖτε, *repent*, most properly to be rendered *change your mind*: and so Heb. xii. 17. it is said, *Esau found no place of repentance*. It is generally applied to Esau's final impenitence; where though the thing possibly is not mistaken, the place is, which the margin of our English Bible renders *he found no way to change his mind*, that is, sure, his father Isaac's mind; who, after he had given away the blessing to Jacob, could not be persuaded by all Esau's importunate cries to recall his word, to repent what he had done, or to alter his mind.

To discover more fully the nature of repentance from this word, and to shew how this change of mind is gradually wrought in us, give me leave to prosecute the grammatical sense and scriptural use of the simple verb νοεῖν, *to mind*; then as it is compounded with the preposition μετά, μετανοεῖν, *to repent*, or *change his mind*.

The simple verb νοεῖν, *to mind*, has four usual notions, importing as many several operations of the mind, that do all make up and compleat the whole duty of repentance.

To mind then in general is actually to apply the mind to any thing; and that is,

1. To think and consider, to take notice, to perceive and understand. Saith St. Paul to Timothy upon an extraordinary business; *Νόει ἃ λέγω, consider, or mind what I say; take notice of it, and consider it well* \*.

2. To discourse and argue, to reason and debate the case, to cast about and examine one and the

\* 2 Tim. ii. 7.



the other side; and so we are obliged to love God, ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας, *with all our mind*, with the exercise of our whole reason\*, and his essence and attributes are clearly seen; how †? τοῖς ποιήμασι νοούμενα, *being understood*, and by good logical consequences fetched from his works of creation.

3. To judge and determine upon the point, to resolve the question, to come to a peremptory conclusion, and to a full period and issue upon the whole matter, to a rational and thorough conviction, and to a round and full persuasion; so Heb. xi. 3. πιστι νοούμεν, *by faith we understand that the world was created*; that is, we are, by the evidence of faith, as clearly and fully persuaded of it, as if we had seen it done with our eyes, as if we had demonstration for it. Thus Rom. xiv. 5. *Let every man be fully assured or persuaded in his own mind or judgment*. And so the compound μετανοεῖν and πειθεσθαι, *to repent and to be persuaded*, are Luke xvi. in the two last verses of the chapter, taken to be all one.

4. To mind or to have a mind, to be cordially affected, to take to heart, to ingage the will and affections: thus it is used John xii. 40. νοεῖν τῇ καρδίᾳ, *to understand, or mind with the heart*; when the heart closes with the understanding, and our knowledge becomes hearty and practical, and so proves a saving knowledge; when the will, the sovereign of our actions, and the whole commonalty of our passions and affections, and all our faculties and members are by one common consent unanimously ingaged in the service; when the soul can say with Joshua, *I and my house will serve*  
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\* Luke x. 27.

† Rom. i. 20.

*the Lord*\*; when the will of man, like nature, acts *ad extremum virium*, exerts her utmost strength, with the most violent efforts of sincere purposes, and constant resolutions, and vigorous indeavours.

When we can thus consider, and debate, and determine, and engage for God and his ways, we are fairly advanced onward in our way to repentance.

But alas! we have erred and strayed from God's ways, and gone out of our own too. Here's a particle then that will set us to rights, and put us in our way again; *μετά*, *post*, *trans*: whence *μετανοια*, *repentance*, signifies an after-thought and a change of mind.

1. As repentance implies an after-thought; when we come to our second and better thoughts: *resipiscere*, after some errors and miscarriages to bethink ourselves again, to resume the matter into debate once more, to give the cause another hearing and bring it to a fair trial, and reversing the former judgment to pass sentence a second time upon ourselves and our lives to better purpose; to draw in the will with her handmaids to a compliance with more prevailing reasons, and to imploy the whole man in prosecution of nobler designs and sublimer ends, than yet we have lived for, and with renewed resolution and fresh diligence to redeem our mispent time, and make amends for our former loiterings.

2. As it imports a change of mind; to have quite other kind of considerations about us, than formerly we have had; to free ourselves from sophistical delusions, and being enlightened by  
the

\* Joshua xxiv. 15.



the Spirit to have a clear judgment, and know all things\*, and by rational deductions to set our principles aright; to weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary, and have the stamp of the Spirit struck upon them; when the bent and tendency of our own spirits, the bias and inclination of our souls lies and is carried clearly heavenward; when finally the stream and current of our wills and affections is turned quite another way, like the rivers in the south, from the creature to the Creator, and our very natures and constitutions are in a manner wholly altered, that we are become altogether new creatures in Christ, created unto good works.

Yet that Christianity may not be mistaken, we are not to understand this thorough change wrought in us, as if it were a substantial change. Grace doth not destroy or imbezil, but correct and amend, adorn and imbellish, improve and perfect nature. We have the same reason and the same affections still left about us, as we had before our conversion; but now they are rightly placed and better employed about objects, mainly convenient and suitable to the excellence of our faculties and glorious future expectations. Religion has no principle of stoicism in it, to pare off the passions and fling them away as useless; it does not require of us to unman ourselves or to be less men than before. It does not take from us the bravery of our spirit, nor the activity of body, nor the cheer of countenance, nor the emotions of our minds in passionate resentments of things that happen; but by well disposing and managing all these upon right objects, to good ends, and by lawful means, according

\* 1 John ii. 20.



cording to the rules of Christ's doctrine, it makes us highly serviceable to the glory of God, and the benefit of his church, and the concerns of our king and country, as well as to our own eternal happiness.

Let us again go over these stages, and first for consideration.

Consider; ay, and consider again, and consider otherwise than we have done.

1. Consider we then in the first place ourselves, our own nature; what we are, and what we shall be; what we are made of, and what we are made for; how frail and how excellent a piece of work we are, made up of a mortal body and an immortal soul.

The generality of men are naturally infidels in this point; not to be persuaded either of their mortality here, or immortality hereafter; of a life to come ever to commence, or the present ever to have an end. We pamper the body and lay out all our time and expensive cares, *ut bene sit lateri*, &c. to provide for back and belly, to go fine, and fare deliciously, and live at ease; and in the mean time neglect and starve our better part.

Thus are we mistaken in ourselves, putting a high value upon the shrine, and paying all our devotions to the flesh, when Θεὸς ἐν σαρκί, its heavenly inmate, the poor soul gets no respect from us: as if we had, what the natural philosopher says of some creatures, *animam pro sale*, souls given us only to keep our bodies from stinking above ground. Thus preposterously we live, and wear out our lives in a gross home-mistake, not considering the excellent faculties of understanding and reason we are endowed with,

with, nor to what end we are sent into the world thus furnished, as if we were put here, as the leviathan in the great waters\*, only to take our pastime.

2. Then consider we God in his nature and in his will. He is a spirit†, and will be worshiped in spirit and in truth, and will not be put off with outside performances, with customary and formal services.

Consider the veracity of his word in his threats and promises, and the rationality of his commands.

Consider his severe justice upon obstinate sinners, and his tender mercy toward the penitent.

Consider, that his abused patience will turn to fury in the end. If his mercy may not reclaim thee, his justice will destroy thee: why dost thou then in a continued course of sinning live in defiance of his justice, daring him to his face, and in contempt of his mercy, standing out in all his gracious proffers? Rather with the Apostle 2 Pet. iii. 15. let us account, that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.

3. Next consider the nature of sin in its ugly self and its direful consequents. It is a monster of none of God's making. Look on it, not as it has all along beguiled thee with false appearances of pleasure and profit; but pluck off those visors, and view it in its natural deformity, and in its own affrighting shape: as it is a deviation from the rule of right reason, an aberration from thy chiefest good and utmost end in all thy actings, the depravation and defilement of body, soul, and spirit.

Take notice, whither it leads thee, whither it will bring thee at last; even in this world, what

\* Psal. civ. 26.

† Job iv. 24.



what miseries and mischiefs proceed from it, and then the losses and pains are to be for ever undergone in the next world for these pleasures of sin for a season. Let the sad after-reckoning make thee avoid and beware its enticements.

After this view of sin in general, consider thy own heinous sins and high provocations, with all the aggravating circumstances; whilst thou perhaps, like a careless and desperate debtor, *malæ fidei debitor*, seekest only how to come into debt, never taking care how to get out; what a score hast thou run up? how hast thou inflamed thy reckoning? stop a while in the career of thy lusts and consider; stand, and lay thy hand upon thy heart, and thy heart upon thy ways; and say, 'tis enough; the time I have already spent in the service of my sins, is more than sufficient.

4. From thy sins turn thine eye upon thy Saviour's sufferings: look upon Christ bleeding on the cross, and making an atonement for those sins of thine; and wilt thou sin on, and forfeit the benefits of his death, and the merit of his passion, spending the value of that blood, wherewith thy soul was purchased, in idle oaths, and widening those wounds by thy profaneness, that were opened for the cleansing of thine iniquities\*? Look upon him whom thou hast pierced, and weep over him; and thus the sight of Christ in faith will ground and help thy repentance.

5. Lastly from present things look forward to the *novissima*, what shall be hereafter.

Consider thyself a dying, as thou must one day, thou knowest not how soon, and shaking hands with the world, what friend hast thou provided for the next life?

Consider

\* Zac. xii. 10.



Consider the judgement to come, the great day of accompts, when the thoughts of all hearts shall be laid open, and every action of our lives scanned.

Consider the joys of heaven, and the rewards of a pious life to a blessed eternity; and whether it will not be very well worth thy while to order thy life to that end.

Consider the torments of hell, which are to the wicked as unavoidable as they will be unsufferable.

And upon the back of these considerations, in fine consider the absolute necessity of being saved, and consequently the indispensable obligation that lies upon thee, to the practice of this duty we are now upon, of repentance, and such a repentance as may be unto salvation.

After thou hast thus considered, debate the case between thee and thy soul, and debate it over again; and if thou hast been mistaken, debate it another way, with an impartial reason and clearer arguments.

Let not the licentious practices and the atheistical discourses of this last and worse age carry thee aside; but examine the reasons of those bold assertors, and bring them to the test.

The sum of thy debate is this: There are but two can pretend to thee, God and Satan; grace and lust; two ends of all our lives, heaven and hell.

Argue with thyself, whether God or the Devil is to carry thee; one must. Which has the better title to thee, which the fairer plea to make for thee? He that made thee and would save thee? or he that betrayed thee at the beginning

in thy first parents, and now goes about seeking to devour thee? which dost thou prefer, and look on as likely to be the better master? whose service the more eligible? whose wages the more desirable? which is to be chosen, for thou hast thy choice, death or life? heaven or hell? endless joys or everlasting burnings?

An easy choice, one would think, for a rational creature to make; did not the God of this world, by a strange deception of sight, darken and blind the minds of most people, and by his perverse reasonings and fallacies overthrow our understandings, and with unimaginal sophistry lead the generality of mankind hoodwinked and blindfold to their destruction.

To go over these things again then, with a more particular scrutiny and examination.

1. Argue then, whether it be not much safer and more prudent, to trust God than to confide in his and thy utter enemy the devil. God is of unquestionable truth in his promises, as he is of undeniable justice in his precepts. Our duty is easy and rational, our rewards unconceivably great and infallibly certain; the devil is cruel in his tasks, and false in his payments.

2. Then debate, whether God's service even in this life be not infinitely more delightful, than the service of sin. Whilst folly wearies herself in the pursuit of vanity, all the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness.

Whatever some say of religion, an evil conscience certainly is the most melancholy thing in the world. I appeal to any one that has  
2 made



Beside, that all the sweets of sin end in bitterness (this serpent carrying a sting of remorse in its tail, and leaving it in the conscience) and that they are so short lived, that they perish in the using: these sensual treatments, for that little time, wherein they tickle the senses, are like the prodigal's husks, nasty and flashy, having nothing of honour or solid advantage in them, and leaving nothing but a fruitless shame behind them. So the Apostle states it, *Cui bono?* says he, *what fruit had you of those things, whereof you are now ashamed\**?

Oh then, have some mercy at last for thyself! take pity upon thy poor soul, tender her as the redeemed one of God; do not palter her away, that cost Christ so dear; make her thy  
L 2 darling,

L 2

darling,

• Rom vi. 21.



darling, the chief of thy cares, and the principal of thy joys; the sum total of all thy concerns.

Methinks I hear the poor soul of some desperate sinner, bespeaking him in such mournful language as this.

Oh tyrant man! why dealest thou so unkindly by me the friend of thy bosom, who am thy life, and ought to be thy joy; who am more to thee than thyself; who am thine own self, [ὁ ψυχῆς σου] upon whose well or ill doing thy eternal state and everlasting welfare depends! Why dost thou unworthily degrade me from the dignity and purposes of my creation, by enslaving me thus to temporal concerns, and making me the captive and vassal of my implacable enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil! Oh that Pythagoras were true, that I might, by the benefit of a transmigration, be released from this inhuman bondage and thralldom of serving wicked man; and rather be lodged in the embraces of some brute animal, which being placed below the sphere of reason, acts regularly, according to its natural instincts, and transgresses not the laws and privileges set by its righteous Maker! Now, I who am by descent allied to heaven, who was designed a companion for angels, God's agent here on earth, the heiress of glory and sole empress of all thy faculties and actions; am basely employed in the vilest offices, turned into thy scullery, immersed into carnality, put to prog for the flesh, and do drudgery to thy body, loaden with the chains of the guilt of thy surfeits and intemperances, and reserved for direful expectations; as if that glorious alliance, I have to celestial spirits, were

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to serve only for an aggravation of thy foul miscarriages, and to be the everlasting reproach of thy punishment: whilst my immortality stands me in no other stead, then to capacitate me for a never dying death.

Tell me, should thy soul stand forth, and present her bright self before thee, as the angel before Balaam, and charge thee with these evil usages; what couldst thou return to such just expositions, which to all eternity will unanswerably be set home upon thee?

Further debate, whether the silly transient pageantry, all the splendid vanities, and the glittering tinsel glories, and the empty husky delights of this fleeting world, are to come into any comparison or competition with the eternal weight of glory, which is prepared for them that serve God in this life\*?

Whether the ways of sin for a short time here be so gainful or pleasant, as to deserve to be bought with the dear purchase of endless misery hereafter? and whether the reprobates have not a very hard and sad bargain of it, to be repented to all eternity?

To be short; whether it be not better to get heaven at any rate than hell? to go to heaven maimed, with thy right hand and right foot cut off, and thy right eye pulled out †, than having all thy members, all thy carnal satisfactions about thee, go to hell? especially when heaven may be had at as cheap a price: many a poor soul taking more pains, and being at greater cost for perpetual torments, than some of the blessed saints have paid for their durable felicities and interminate bliss.

L 3

Upon

\* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

† Matt. v. 29, 30.



Upon this debate, wherein I have, with as much plainness and clearness as I could, stated the case; because on it lies the main stress of our conversion; it will be no difficult thing, one might conceive, to determine which is our third stage.

Yet because a man may come up so far toward repentance, as to know very well and understand the advantages of a pious life, and the great hazard he runs in a sinful course; and to debate and argue with himself, and state his case aright; and yet, for all that, be negligent of the main, and in spite of good premises still maintain a wrong conclusion; and this either out of weakness of judgment, being disabled by the debauchery of vicious customs and sensual pleasures, or hardened either by wilful impenitence or by God's just judgment, that seeing they do not see\*; or out of a dilatory laziness and lothness to go about this necessary, important and (as all changes are) troublesome and painful work; they put off repentance with shifts and evasions, and bid her come again to-morrow; harping upon that of St. Austin before his conversion, *non modo, Domine*; not yet, good Lord. I shall endeavour, by removing the impediments, to stir you up, and excite you to a speedy determination, with some awakening motives.

1. First, that the longer thou stayest, the more difficult the work will be. Thy sins increase the while, thy graces impair; the burden grows greater upon thee, and thy strength less; and thou thyself wilt be still more unresolved and indisposed every day than other.

But

\* Matt. xiii. 13.



But suppose to-morrow may serve turn; how wilt thou be sure of to-morrow? since,

2. Secondly, the uncertainty of life makes delay very dangerous: Not to say, how disingenuous it is to put off God thus from time to time, and make him stay thy leisure; not to leave thy sins willingly, till they leave thee, and defer thy resolutions of good to thy very death-bed by thy good will, thy ill will I should say, and not determining to shake hands with thy lusts, till thou hast taken leave of all thy other friends, and art ready to set out for another world. How knowest thou but it may be said to thee, as to the rich fool in the Gospel? *This night shall thy soul be taken from thee* \*; what a case wouldst thou be in, shouldst thou be surprized, and hurried away in thy sins, before thou hast made thy peace?

The Rabbins have a famed saying, *Uno die ante mortem agenda est pœnitentia*; a man must resolve to repent one day, before he dies: which one has well commented, that that one day must be this day; because we know not whether we shall live to see another. How many have gone to hell full of good purposes †. It is St. Bernard's note upon *væ prægnantibus*, woe to them that are with child in those days.

This may be the last opportunity that thou mayest have, the last sermon thou wilt hear. But this is but a may be, some one may say, and therefore it may as well not be. True, but what wise man would put it to such a venture?

3. Thirdly, every one hath a day of grace. The sun may set upon thee, thou knowest not how soon; work while thou hast day before thee.

L 4

\* Luke xii. 20.

† Matt. xxiv. 19.

thee \*. *Res delicata Sanctus Spiritus*; the Holy Spirit will not be dallied with; cannot away with a luke-warm indifference. *To-day if thou wilt hear his voice* †. Grieve not the Spirit with unkind delays ‡. Vex not God's patience which waits for thy return, and would lead thee to repentance §. His Spirit will not always strive. Break off in time, and come in, whilst thou hast admittance ||; seek God while he may be found \*\*. Especially,

4. Fourthly, take heed of filling up the measure of thine iniquity. Some go so far even in this life, as never to return. They are pointed out for destruction, and wear God's mark as Cain did; when God gives them over, and seals them to damnation, and delivers them into the power of Satan.

Well, but thou wilt say, there is no fear of that with me; I find my heart moved many times, and the good Spirit breathing upon me. That will not do, if thou go no further. Therefore

5. Fifthly, thou shouldst take thyself at such advantages and pursue convictions home, and drive them close to thy heart. After a good discourse, or under any affliction, when thou findest thy heart warm within thee, quench not the smoking flax, but blow it up into a bright flame of zealous resolution. Thus David did; *before I was afflicted* (says he) *I went astray, but now I resolve to keep thy word* ††.

6. Sixthly, fasten and rivet those thy purposes of a well begun course and thy resolutions

\* John ix. 4.  
§ Rom. ii. 4.

† Psal. xcv. 7.  
|| Gen. vi. 3.  
†† Psal. cxix. 67.

‡ Eph. iv. 30.  
\*\* Psal. xxxii. 7.



tions of amendment with frequent reading and meditation and prayer and holy conference.

Though it be God's work to turn the heart, he does it in his own way. His ordinances are the conduit pipes, that usually convey his graces; nor are his assistances to be expected any other way than in the ordinary means. For instance, the Spirit claps his seal upon the heart; but thou must wait upon him for it in his own appointments. The sacrament is a sealing time. Attend him there, to sign thy vows and resolutions, and renew thy covenant with God by sacrifice in the blood of the covenant.

But then in the fourth and last place, to come to a perfect closure and an intire compliance of the whole man, with this *dictamen* and resolution of the judgment, to make this determination practical; it is not a velleity, a Balaam's wish, not a *semiterna voluntas*, which was Agrippa's religion, who was almost persuaded, that will serve turn: but it must be a full assent and constant practice, in a turning of the whole heart, a compleat engagement of the will and affections of all the faculties of the soul and members of the body, in an universal and impartial obedience: when we are clearly fetched off from all the mistakes and miscarriages of our former life, and quite unbottomed from nature and vicious custom, and implanted into Christ; when our *ὁλόκληρον*\*, body, soul and spirit are sanctified and cleansed from all impurities, and furnished with a new stock of right and sound principles and holy resolutions†; and we are transformed by the renewing of our mind‡, and are born *ἄνωθεν*, *denuo*, over again, and

\* 2 Thef. v. 23.

† Rom. xii. 2.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 23.



and *desuper*, from above, and the work of regeneration is perfectly wrought in us; when the old man of sin is mortified, and dead with the lusts thereof, and we are quickened in the spirit to a newness of life; when the whole building of the earthly Adam is pulled down, and the rubbish of our former conversation carried off; and a new spiritual structure raised according to righteousness, and dedicated for a temple to the Holy Ghost.

Some there are, sober and considering persons, that can understand and examine things and determine well enough; but do not go through with the work, but stick in the birth, and cannot bring forth. They will either weak or perverse, the affections stark and stiff, or desperately preingaged; the *intus existens*, some minion lust within keeping possession by main force, and shutting out the tenders of grace; so that now *non persuadebis etiamsi persuaseris*; let them be convinced ever so much, they cannot be prevailed with.

Again the heart is deceitful above all things. Psal. lxxiv. 6, the Hebrew expresses it significantly לב עמוק a deep heart. It is hard to come to the bottom of it; deep as a well, which when foul, must have all the water that was in it laded forth, all muddy prepossessions of evil habits purged out by repentance, and then be supplied with fresh springs of an ever-over-flowing grace.

Wherefore, to make sure of the heart, to engage and fasten the will, take these three reasons.

1. All we can do without that is nothing. If the heart be dead in trespasses and sins, the gawdy

dy flourish of an outside profession is but as the adornments of an hearse, flowers strewed upon a carcass. The fear of laws, regard to credit, care of interest are but sorry insufficient restraints, if grace do not φερεῖν τὴν καρδίαν, keep garison in the heart. Popish penance may somewhat afflict the outward man, and be a bodily exercise, but that avails nothing, unless true repentance fetch out the core from within.

2. The will is all. *Animus cujusque est quisque*, the mind of a man is the man. Where the mind is thoroughly convinced and changed, there will follow presently an alteration quite through the whole man. All parts and powers pay a ready obedience to the commands of the will. When that takes in kindly the light communicated to it from the understanding, and humbly submits itself and yields to the powerful and prevailing truths, and is impregnated by the impulses and influences of God's good spirit, it does with its elicit acts (like the spring in a watch) set all the rest in motion.

3. It is much easier to be really good, than it is only to seem so: every one has that care of their reputation, that they would be thought good. Machiavel himself commends the appearance and pretence of being religious to his prince. I need not tell you what kind of people those were, who lately among us went under the name of the godly party. But surely such must carry on their design with great difficulty and reluctancy. The hypocrite has a very hard part to act; who, beside a continual anxiety and fear of discovery, is fain to be at a great deal of pains, to use a great deal of artifice  
and

\* Psal. iv. 7.



and shift, to cozen others and himself too in the end: whilst the downright good man, whose intentions and words and actions are alike and all of a piece, who acts from a clear honest principle, walks confidently and fears no surprize.

The will, thus drawn in, will quickly bring in the affections along with her, which will every of them, in spiritual objects, meet with great varieties of entertainment, and be sure to find that satisfaction, which in vain they hunted for in outward enjoyments: and then it will conform the outward man into a decorum of action, besitting the principles of grace and the dignity of our profession.

To sum up the business of repentance in a word; the wise man, Prov. xxviii. 13. has reduced it to two heads, to confess and forsake our sins. St. Bernard almost as short and not much unlike, *dolere præterita, cavere futura*; to grieve and be displeased with ourselves for what is past, and to take better heed for the time to come.

It must be a repentance from sin as well as for sin; it must be of thoughts as well as deeds; of errors in judgment as well as miscarriages of life; finally it must bring forth fruits, and be accompanied with works meet for repentance\*. To repent, to cry *peccavi*, and go on still in the same sin, to be always craving God's mercy, and never stand in fear of his justice, is in short but to mock God and our own souls to boot.

Further, our repentance must be proportionable to our offences. Greater sins must be taken to heart with greater regrets. The more scandalous

\* Matt. iii. 8.



scandalous and notorious any one's faults have been, the more signal must his conversion be, and the more exemplary his conversation. The longer we have continued in any ill practice, the more lasting must our exercise of repentance be. Chronical and habitual distempers must be put into a course of spiritual physic.

To shut up all: repentance, as it is a necessary duty, so it is a great privilege. None so perfect, but need it; none so bad, but may attain it: witness Mary Magdalen, the penitent thief, the publican, the prodigal, Judas himself, it was not so much his treason as his impenitence gave him the character of a devil\*; for so much as men harden themselves in their sin, so much they grow into the nature of devils, who though they believe, yet cannot repent.

To stir us up to this duty of repentance, I shall not need to seek for arguments: we have one and a potent one too at hand: *The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

I shall conclude with that of the Apostle, 2 Tim. iv. 18. only turning the words into a wish, *The Lord deliver us from every evil work, (which must be done by repentance) and preserve us unto his heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.*

\* John vi. 7.

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## On St. Peter's Day.

June 29.

By Dr. SAMUEL CLARKE of St. James's.

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MATTHEW, Chap. xvi. Ver. 18.

*And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

THE occasion and connexion of these words, is this: our Saviour, examining his disciples how far they understood the doctrine they had been taught; asks them, ver. 13. *Whom do men say, that I, the Son of Man, am?* The very character he here and elsewhere gives himself, *I the Son of Man*, was a sufficiently plain intimation who he was. For the phrase, *the Son of Man*, necessarily signifies one who is so styled by way of eminence or distinction; and, in discourse with persons who had been educated Jews, it could not but be understood to refer to the use of that title or character somewhere in the Old Testament. Now the passage where it is mentioned in the most remarkable and distinguishing manner, is in the prophecy of Daniel, chap. vii. 13. *Behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven; (the Son of Man which is in heaven, as our Saviour styles himself in the Gospel, John iii. 13) and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before*

before him: and there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. The Jews all very well knew, that this was a plain prophecy and character of the Messiah. And therefore our Saviour, by taking upon himself that title by way of eminence, *the Son of Man*, clearly enough intimated, whom he professed himself to be. However, in order to put his disciples upon a more distinct declaration how far they had hitherto understood him; and thereby to introduce a new occasion of giving them farther and more particular instructions; he asks them, ver. 13. *Whom do men say that I am?* The disciples answered; *Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the Prophets.* He saith unto them, *but whom say ye that I am?* Simon Peter answered, *thou art Christ the Son of the living God.* Then said Jesus unto him, *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* That is, the confession you have made, is not a bare human conjecture or opinion, as the Jews had guessed him to be either *Elias*, or *John the Baptist*, or one of the old prophets risen from the dead: but your confession (says he) is the very truth; which God has enabled you to discover. *And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter*, ver. 18. Thou, Simon the son of Jonah, shalt for the future be known by the name of Peter, which signifies a rock, a firm and constant, an unshaken and immoveable professor of



of the truth. It is very usual in Scripture, to give men in this manner emphatical and significant names. Thus, Gen. xvii. 5. *Thy name shall be called Israel; for a father of many nations* (so the word Abraham signifies in the original) *a father of many nations have I made thee.* Again, Gen. xxxii. 28. *Thy name shall be called Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.* So here likewise, thou art Peter, that is, a rock, a firm and constant, a faithful and unshaken witness, support, and defender of the truth. And upon this rock, upon this firmness and steadiness of yours in professing and preaching the great truths of the Gospel, *upon this will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.*

In order to the fuller and clearer understanding of which whole discourse of our Saviour; it will be necessary to explain from the beginning, the nature and meaning, the ground and reason, of that metaphor or figure of speaking, which in numberless other places of Scripture, as well as in this text, is used with great propriety and elegance in the description of the Church of Christ. It is to be observed therefore, that God having anciently placed his name in Jerusalem, that is, having appointed it to be the seat of his throne and worship, the place of confluence of the worshippers of the one true God; and thereby made it by way of eminence, *the city of the great king, the holy city; it from thence*

thence became, in the prophetic style and language, a type of heaven. From hence, in the New Testament, the state of heaven is figuratively stiled, *Jerusalem which is above* \*, *Mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem* †. And in the Revelation particularly, it is described at large, under the notion of a glorious and happy city; ch. xxi. 10. *He shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descended out of heaven from God; having the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone most precious—: And the city was pure gold;—and the foundations were garnished with all manner of precious stones. To which description the Apostle plainly alludes* ‡; and again in the same chapter, *they desire* (says he) *a better country, that is, an heavenly* §: And, *Abraham looked for a city which hath foundations* || (in the original it is, *the city which hath the foundations*) *whose builder and maker is God. Hence, still farther, in pursuance of the same similitude, the church of God, even here upon earth, is stiled the city, the temple, and the house of God. The city of God. The streams thereof shall make glad the city of God* \*\*. *Ye are come unto the city of the living God,—the general assembly and church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven* ††. *Also the temple of God. Ye are the temple of God* ‡‡. *Ye are the temple of the living God.* §§. *Ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in*

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\* Gal. iv. 26. † Heb. xii. 22. ‡ Heb. ix. 16.

§. ver. 16. || ver. 10. \*\* Ps. xlvi. 4. †† Heb. xii. 22.

‡‡ 1 Cor. iii. 16.

§§ 2 Cor. vi. 16.



whom the whole building fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord; in whom also you are builded together; for an habitation of God through the spirit\*. And 2 Theſſ. ii. 3. *That man of ſin—ſitting in the temple of God; that is, a general apoſtacy and love of worldly power, overſpreading the viſible church. Laſtly, it is ſtiled likewise the houſe of God: The houſe of God, which is the church †. Whoſe houſe are we ‡. Ye are God's building §. Ye alſo, as lively ſtones, are built up a ſpiritual houſe unto God ||. And ch. iv. 17. Judgment muſt begin at the houſe of God.*

Now the church of God being thus uſually, upon the occaſion and for the reaſons already explained, repreſented in Scripture under the figurative notion of a holy city, or temple, or houſe of God; the ſeveral parts of it likewise, in purſuance of the ſame metaphor, are deſcribed proportionably under the like figures of ſpeech, as the whole. Hence the word foundation, as denoting the moſt material part and ſupport of the whole building, is elegantly made uſe of to ſignify either ſuch men or things, ſuch perſons or doctrines, upon which the whole of religion mainly relies, and by which it is principally ſupported.

Sometimes it is applied to doctrines: to denote thoſe great, thoſe primary, thoſe neceſſary and eſſential doctrines of religion; upon which all other true doctrines are built; without which religion cannot ſubſiſt; and of which no Chriſtian can innocently or excuſably be ignorant. Theſe are ſtiled, Heb. v. 12. *The firſt principles*

\* Eph. ii. 19.      † 1 Tim. iii. 15.      ‡ Heb. iii. 6.

§ 1 Cor. iii. 9.

|| 1 Pet. ii. 5.



*principles of the oracles of God; and, Heb. vi. 1. The principles of the doctrine of Christ, and the foundation. In modern language, they are usually called the fundamentals of religion; the doctrines, wherein Christianity itself consists; in opposition to those, which distinguish from each other the several sects or parties of Christians. In the former consists all true virtue and piety: the latter are the occasions of never-ceasing contentions, schisms and uncharitableness. What these fundamental doctrines in particular are (though St. Paul has given us an express catalogue of them, Heb. vi. 1, 2.) seldom any sect or party of Christians are willing to define; because by so doing they would plainly discover, that the things about which they generally most fiercely contend, are indeed no necessary parts of religion at all. But in the Scripture itself, these fundamental doctrines are perpetually insisted on; and inculcated, as those on which in reality the whole of religion depends. And the teaching or preaching of these doctrines, is what St. Paul calls *laying the foundation*, (Heb. vi. 1. and 1 Cor. iii. 10.) *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder I have laid the foundation. But let every man (says he) take heed of building thereupon: for other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* The meaning is, no man can make any thing else to be fundamental in religion, beside what Christ himself has made to be so. *If any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones; if he preaches the true doctrine of the Gospel, and builds thereupon virtuous practice; he shall receive a reward,* ver. 14. *If he corrupts the**

doctrine of Christ in its essentials, and teaches men any vicious practice; he shall be punished very severely. If he builds wood, hay, stubble; that is, if he teaches needless and useless, though not vicious doctrines; he shall suffer loss, he shall in great part lose his reward: nevertheless, for the sincerity of his intention, *he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire*, ver. 15. The sense is, *He shall be saved difficultly, as it were out of the fire*. According to the like expression in St. Jude, ver. 22. *Of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire*.

But further; the word, foundation, as it is thus sometimes applied figuratively to doctrines fundamental; so, at other times, it is in a proportionable sense applied likewise to persons. Thus, in the passage before recited, Eph. ii. 20. *Ye are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets*. From whence is derived that elegant and lively description, Rev. xxi. 14. *The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb*. *Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner-stone: the Apostles and Prophets are the foundation*: and the church or entire body of good men through all ages, are the whole building or spiritual temple of God; *in which ye also, saith the Apostle, ye also, as living stones*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. *are builded together, for an habitation of God through the Spirit*. And such persons, as, after the first preaching of the Gospel, were, in a more eminent and illustrious manner, promoters of true religion; are, by continuing the same similitude, aptly called *pillars*, Gal. ii. 19. *James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars*.



*pillars. And Rev. iii. 12. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.* Which passages, by the way, teach us to rectify a mistake in the vulgar interpretation of that noble text of St. Paul, *1 Tim. iii. 15. That thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth.* That St. Paul, in one and the same sentence, wherein he calls the church the house of God, should at the same time stile it also a pillar, which is a part of that house; is very hard to conceive. From the fore-cited places therefore, and others of the like import, where the same word is always applied to single persons; it seems very probable, that here also it ought to be understood, not of the whole church, but of one person only, even of Timothy himself: *That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God; which is the church of the living God; that thou mayest know how to behave thyself therein, in such manner (as being, or) as that thou mayest be a pillar and eminent support of the truth.* The sense is much more reasonable, and agreeable to other places of Scripture; and removes a difficult expression, much abused and perverted by popish writers to support their absurd doctrine of the infallibility of the church.

Having thus fully and at large explained, from its first original, the nature and meaning, the ground and reason, of that metaphor, or figure of speaking, which in numberless other places of Scripture, as well as in my text, is used with great propriety and elegance in the description of the church of Christ; it from hence



becomes very easy to understand the true sense of these words of our Saviour, *Thou art Peter, thou art (as thy name signifies) a rock; and upon this rock will I build my church.* The church is the city, the temple, the house or building of God. In this spiritual temple of God *Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner-stone, in whom the whole building is fitly framed together.* And the Apostles and Prophets are the foundation. Among these, St. Peter having, with a particular forwardness and zeal, made confession of his believing Christ to be the Messias; was accordingly approved by his Master, and receives the following answer: Thou shalt be (says our Lord) one principal foundation-stone in my building. By thy firmness and steadiness, by thy courage, constancy and zeal in this confession, thou shalt become an eminent founder of my church, a most successful preacher of my doctrine to the world, in the first age of the Gospel. *Thou art Peter, thou art a rock, and upon this rock I will build my church.*

It follows: *and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* That is, opposition and persecution, even unto death itself, shall never be able to stop the progress of my Gospel. The word, which we here render hell, *ᾅδης*, signifies in the original, not the state of the damned (for that is always in the Greek expressed by a very different word) but the word here used signifies always that invisible state, *γέεννα*, in general only, to which death is the gate or passage. So that this phrase in the text is exactly of the same import with those expressions in the Old Testament: *gates of the grave, the chambers of death,*

*death, and the gates of death.* Ps. xxxviii. 10. *I shall go to the gates of the grave.* Prov. vii. 27. *The way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.* Job xxxviii. 17. *Have the gates of death been opened unto thee?* Ps. ix. 13. *Thou liftest me up from the gates of death:* And, Ps. cvii. 18. *They draw near unto the gates of death.* When therefore our Saviour promises that the gates of hell, that is, of death; for the word hell, as I now observed, when it means the state of the damned, is always in the original quite another word: when I say, our Saviour promises that the *gates of hell*, that is, of death shall not prevail against his church; his meaning plainly is the same as in those other promises, Matt. xxviii. 20. *Lo! I am with you always even unto the end of the world;* your mortality shall not put an end to the preaching of my gospel. And, ch. xvii. 20. *Where two or three, wheresoever, or whensoever, in what place or at what time soever in any age of the world, two or three are gathered together in my name; there am I in the midst of them.*

Lastly, our Saviour adds in the next words immediately following the text: *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.* The sense is; thou shalt first open the kingdom of the Messias, and make the first publication of the Gospel to the Gentiles; (which we read was accordingly fulfilled, in the 2d, 10th, and 15th chapters of the Acts) and by the terms of that doctrine which I commission you to preach on earth, shall every man's sentence be finally and judicially determined of God in heaven.



And now, having distinctly explained the full meaning of our Saviour, in this whole discourse of his to St. Peter; it will be very obvious to raise from thence the following observations,

1st, I observe, that according to the true explication of the word, it makes no real difference at all in the sense, whether by the rock upon which our Saviour here promises to build his church, be meant (as Protestant expositors generally understand it) the confession of St. Peter, or, as the Romish writers contend, the person of St. Peter. I say, it makes no difference at all, as to the true sense of the words. For, if this rock be the confession of St. Peter; yet the application of the phrase to him in so particular a manner, must needs be with regard to his personal firmness and steadiness in that confession. From whence nothing can be collected to the advantage of the cause of the church of Rome. For,

2dly, I observe, that the word *rock*, the *foundation-stone* of a building, a strong or well-laid support, is not at all, as the church of Rome ridiculously supposes, an emblem of authority, power or dominion; but it signifies firm and constant, effectual and successful, preaching of the Gospel at the beginning: which was the foundation of the church of Christ. Which church, the Scripture tells us, was built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. And in that foundation, St. Peter was a rock, or a firm and eminent part of it.

3dly, I observe, that immediately after the speaking of these great things to St. Peter; our Lord, as it were with a particular view that it might be left upon record as a guard against that  
extra-

extravagant opinion, which he foreknew future ages, for the purposes of tyranny and worldly dominion, would entertain of St. Peter's personal authority: our Lord, I say, takes occasion in his very next discourse with him, to rebuke him with a sharper severity than he ever used toward any of the rest of his disciples. Ver. 23. *Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.* And probably for the very same reason it is, that he was suffered to fall and to deny his Master, more shamefully than any of the other disciples; and that it is particularly recorded in Scripture-history, how St. Paul afterward *withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed*, Gal. ii. 11. Of the same kind seems to be our Saviour's affecting, as it were, to speak always with very small respect of the Blessed Virgin: *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* And, *Yea rather blessed are they, that hear the word of God, and keep it.* And again, *Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?*——Behold, *whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother.*

4thly, I observe, that as the word *rock* signifies nothing of authority or dominion, but a stone or firm part in the foundation on which the church is built; so it is a character, in which St. Peter could not possibly have any successors; in any other sense, than in that wherein he himself applies it to all Christians in general; in his first Epistle, ch. ii. 5. *Ye also (saith he) as living stones are built up a spiritual house unto God.* And St. Paul to the Ephesians, ch. ii. 22. *You also*



*also are builded together, upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, into an holy temple, for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

5thly, I observe, that what is here said to St. Peter, is elsewhere applied equally to all the Apostles. The city of God, saith St. John, *had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.* The church was built equally upon them all. And our Saviour with great expressness and earnestness charges them, that there should be no such thing as dominion or preheminance amongst them; but *whosoever* (says he) *will be great among you, let him be your servant,* Matt. xx. 27. Further: that which is here spoken to St. Peter about having *the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, is elsewhere expressly directed to all the Apostles: John xx. 23. *Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.* The full meaning of which sublime expressions, is that not even the Apostles themselves, much less that any of their fallible successors, had a discretionary power of forgiving or retaining men's sins; but, that they were appointed preachers and messengers of that gracious covenant of reconciliation, according to the terms and conditions whereof, God will either forgive men's sins or not. God will judge men according to our Gospel; or by the rule of that doctrine, which we are commanded to preach to the world. St. Paul expresses the sense of this trust, with the greatest exactness of expression, Rom. ii. 16. *In the day, says he, when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel.*

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## On St. James's Day.

July 25th.

By Dr. MATTHEW HOLE.

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St. MATTHEW, Chap. xvi. Ver. 24.

*Then said Jesus to his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.*

THE saint we commemorate this day, is St. James the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, called James the Great, to distinguish him from James the son of Alpheus, surnamed the Less\*.

The Collect for the day minds us of this holy Apostle's leaving his father, and all that he had, and his being, without delay, obedient to the call of Jesus Christ, by following him; and from thence teaches us to pray, that we, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, may be evermore ready to follow his holy commandments, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

By this example we are taught the great lesson of self-denial, and bearing the cross, of which I shall therefore treat at this time, from these words of our Saviour, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, &c.* Where we have,

\* See Vol. I. p. 451.

First,



First, a privilege to be desired and aspired to, *If any will come after me*; that is, if any will be my disciple.

Secondly, three great duties or qualifications annexed to it; and they are, (1.) *Let him deny himself.* (2.) *Let him take up his cross.* And, (3.) *Let him follow me.* Of each of which something particularly. And,

First, of the great privilege here mentioned and offered by our Saviour, *If any will come after me*; that is, if they will be my disciples. Masters, we know, are wont to go before the scholars, and disciples use to follow and come after them. Now Christ represents himself here under the notion of a master, leading and teaching his scholars, his disciples following and coming after him for instruction. And this is a high honour and privilege, to be instructed by a teacher come from God; one that spake as never man spake, and did the works that never man did: for hereby we may be secured from error, or learning any thing that is amiss, and be sure of hearing the most useful and the most excellent instructions. We may very well believe what he affirms, trust to what he promises, and obey whatsoever he commands, receiving all our lessons from this divine teacher, not as the words of man, but, as indeed they are, the words of God.

And as it is a great honour to have such a master, so is it a great happiness to learn of him, and to become good proficient in his school; for that will shew us to be his true disciples, and make us in a great measure like unto him: which is propounded here as a very desirable privilege, and a thing of which we ought to be  
highly

highly ambitious. *If any will come after me; that is, if any will be Christians indeed, not only titular or nominal, but real Christians; not like Agrippa, almost, but altogether Christians, which we should all aspire to; if we would willingly be what we profess, the true disciples of Christ, and so come after him here, that we may come to him hereafter; in a word, if we will answer the noble title of a Christian, and receive the reward of Christianity, all which are great invaluable privileges: What then? why, our Saviour here directs us what to do to attain unto them; and that is, to deny ourselves, to take up the cross, and to follow him.*

These are the three great lessons required of all his disciples. The

1st, whereof his self-denial, *Let him deny himself.* This is not only the first, but the hardest lesson in Christ's school; which if we get over and learn well, we shall soon make a good progress in Christianity, and our profiting will appear to all men; but if we fail or falter in this first step, we stumble at the threshold, and shall be able to go no farther.

But what is it to deny ourselves? for this seems a strange as well as difficult lesson: can any thing be nearer or dearer to us than ourselves? Hath not God planted in every man a love of himself, and a care of his own concerns and preservation, and made that the measure of his love and carriage towards others? how then are we commanded to renounce this natural principle of our being, and not only to fall out with, but even to deny our very selves?

In answer to this, we must note, that *God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions.*



*inventions* \*. We came out of God's hands perfect, sound, and pure in all our faculties, having the image of our Maker stamped upon us, which consisted in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness: but we have since corrupted our natures, depraved our faculties, and perverted our ways, *every imagination of the thoughts of the heart being only evil continually*. By which means we have contracted many vicious habits and inclinations, preferring our own fancies, wills, desires, and interests before the will of God, and the commands of Christ.

Now to deny ourselves, is to renounce all such corrupt habits and inclinations; not to gratify ourselves in any thing, how near and dear soever it may be to us, that stands in opposition against, or comes in competition with our duty to God or our Saviour. But to speak more particularly, to be Christ's disciples, we must,

1. Deny our natural selves, that is, our reason, will, and affections, when they oppose the revealed truths and will of God. As for our reason, we must stoop that to faith in matters of divine revelation, not suffering it to be too curious in prying into them, but to believe them upon the word and testimony of God, who is truth itself. The mysteries of religion are too sublime for our weak capacities to comprehend; the doctrine of the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Resurrection of the dead, have depths unfathomable by our shallow reason, and therefore may not be measured or scanned by it: *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they*

\* Eccl. vii. 29.

*they are spiritually discerned* \*. Our reason is nonplussed about the most common and obvious things in nature, and therefore must not pretend to judge of higher and spiritual matters; and yet vain man would be wise above that which is written, and reject the mysteries of the Gospel, because he cannot fully understand or comprehend them; which is to set up a candle above the sun, and *to choose darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil*. And therefore we must not rely upon, but renounce our own judgment in things that are so far above it, and deny our reason, when it interposes and interferes with divine revelation: believing not what our reason, but God's word tells us, looking upon it as the greatest reason to believe it, because God hath said it.

Then for our wills; though they were once right, and agreeable with the divine will, yet now they are become crooked and contrary to the will of God, refusing the good, and choosing evil: and therefore we must deny these too, saying in all things as our Saviour did about the bitter cup, *Not my will, but thine be done*. If Christ denied his own most pure and perfect will, that his Father's will might be accomplished, how much more ought we to deny our own perverse wills, that are so averse to all good, and prone to all evil, that they may be made conformable to the perfect will of God? If we do otherwise, instead of coming after Christ, we run away from him, and move and act quite contrary to him, which is rather to be a foe than follower of him; and therefore to keep us

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\* 1 Cor. ii. 14.



to it, he hath taught us every day to say, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

Lastly, for our affections, these too are become very disorderly and irregular, placed upon wrong objects, and running into undue measures; loving what we should hate, and hating what we should love; desiring what we should detest, and detesting what we should desire: and therefore these two are to be renounced or rectified, denying them all unlawful, and fixing them upon proper objects; yea, and denying ourselves the use even of lawful things, when they are apt to run into inordinacy and excess. This is to deny our natural selves, by restraining our reason in the mysteries of religion, by regulating our wills according to the will of God, and rectifying our affections from all extravagance and disorder.

2. To be Christ's disciples, we must deny our sinful and sensual selves. This the Apostle expresses, by *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts*\*. A true Christian must not indulge or allow himself in any known sin, but must mortify and abandon all; not only those to which he may have some aversion, but likewise those to which he may be most inclined. If we observe it, we shall find every man ordinarily hath some darling or beloved vice. David calls it *his own sin*; and the Apostle, *the sin that doth easily beset us*: a sin which a man's thoughts run most upon, and his desires are most eagerly carried out unto, which he takes most pleasure in, and is most of all loth to part with.

Now this sin, whatever it may be, either pride or covetousness, malice or uncleanness, luxury

\* Tit. ii. 12.

luxury or drunkenness, or whatever else it is, must be totally renounced and relinquished by us, if we mean to be Christ's disciples; otherwise he will never own us for his, if we allow or indulge ourselves in any known sin, for it is that sin, and not Christ, that is master: and therefore we must part with that or our Saviour, for we cannot serve two masters, but must either deny ourselves or him.

3. To be Christ's disciples, we must deny our worldly selves; that is, all earthly possessions, relations, and even life itself, at his call, and in his cause. We must be ready to quit all the profits and pleasures of this world, when they interfere with the love, or come into competition with, the glory of God: for *if any so love the world, as rather to leave Christ than his estate, the love of the Father is not in him\**. Yea, we must forsake father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, and all the nearest and dearest things in the world, and undergo the greatest hardships that any can put upon us, rather than forsake Christ, or do any thing that is offensive to him: for *he that loveth father or mother, or any other relation, more than me (saith our Saviour) is not worthy of me; and he that forsaketh not all that he hath, and hateth not his own life, for my sake, cannot be my disciple†*. These may seem hard sayings, but they are grounded upon good reason, and attended with a great reward; for he is not worthy to be Christ's disciple, that doth not prefer him above all other things; and he that parts with any thing for his sake, shall receive more than a thousand fold.

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\* 1 John ii. 15.

† Luke xiv. 26, 27.



The Gospel for this day begins thus: *Then came to him, that is, to Jesus, the mother of Zebedee's children.* When this was, the verses immediately going before declare; it was when *Jesus was going up to Jerusalem with his twelve disciples,* ver. 17, 18. to whom he discovered, in the way, the time and manner of his death, to prevent their being surprized or seized with sudden trouble, to see him delivered up without any notice: withal telling them, that *on the third day; after they had put him to death, he should rise again;* ver. 19.

Now upon the mention of his resurrection, which they supposed to be the time of his being exalted to his kingdom, *the mother of Zebedee's children came with her sons;* that is, with James and John, two of his disciples; who putting their mother upon it, came with her to Jesus, worshipping or falling down on her knees to present a petition to him, desiring a certain thing of him. Our Saviour seeing her in that humble posture, and thinking that she had something to ask, said unto her, *what wilt thou?* She, prompted, as it is thought, by her two sons, who had too much of ambition in them, said unto him, *Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one at thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.* Which request was grounded on those words of our Saviour to his disciples, Matt. xix. 28. *Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Where he seems to promise his followers, that as soon as he came to his kingdom, which they supposed to be immediately

mediately after his rising again from the dead, they should be highly honoured and advanced by him. The thing there promised seems to refer to the dignity vouchsafed to the sons of Jacob, of being the heads of all the tribes of Israel; among which his two sons Joseph and Judah had the first places. In allusion hereunto, the mother of Zebedee's children desires of our Saviour, that her two sons James and John, who had left all to follow him, might be remembered and promoted to the highest seats of honour in his kingdom, the one at his right hand, the other at his left, in his throne of glory. By which we see, that the very disciples themselves mistook the nature of Christ's kingdom, taking it for a temporal kingdom, or a kingdom of this world, and so dreamt of nothing but golden mountains and great preferments; as appears by that saying of the Apostles after his resurrection, *wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom unto Israel*\*? which farther shews us the proneness of mankind to ambition, and to aspire too much to worldly greatness. Few can be content with their lower stations, but all are for mounting to places of honour, and climbing above others. The sparks do not more naturally fly upward, than mens minds are for rising and aspiring to great things. Little things are commonly overlooked and despised, yea and counted as nothing; it is only the greatest objects that draw the eyes, and fix the desires of the mind upon them. This is evident in these two disciples, whose sight was dazzled with the splendor of worldly greatness, and thereby betrayed into inordinate lusting and longings after it.

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\* Acts i. 6.



But what reply did our Saviour make to the request of the mother, and the ambition of her two sons? Why, such a one as checked the vanity and ambition of both; for *Jesus answered and said unto them, ye know not what ye ask.* Your desires run after vain things, and are carried out to matters not proper for you to ask, or me to give: it all proceeds from ignorance of the manner of my kingdom, and the end of my coming, for I came rather to suffer than to reign here upon earth; and if you will be my disciples, you must count more upon crosses and troubles, than upon crowns and scepters. This hath been my lot here, and will be your portion too, if you will be my followers.

Let me therefore ask you another question, saith he: *Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?* that is, instead of an overflowing cup of mirth and joyfulness, can you pledge me in my bitter cup of affliction, and take it off too, as I am about to do, to the very dregs? Can you be plunged over head and ears in the waters of adversity, as I have been in the waters of baptism, and bear those sorrows and sufferings for me, which I have undergone for you? To which they answered, and said unto him, *We are able.* A bold and confident answer, that shewed too great a presumption upon their own strength! like St. Peter, who boldly told our Saviour, that though all the world should deny him, yet would not he deny him; though upon the first apprehension of danger, he shamefully denied him three times, with many bitter oaths and execrations. Which should teach us not to rely too much upon our  
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own strength, nor build our confidence on so weak a foundation; but rather to suspect ourselves, to be sensible of our own weakness, and to be daily imploring the divine blessing and assistance.

But the disciples here seem to make their pretence of patience a motive to their preferment, and urge their magnanimity in suffering to raise them to the greater glories: we are able and ready to suffer, and therefore hope to be advanced.

But Christ gave them such an answer as served at once to encourage their patience, and to check their ambition: for he said unto them, *Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with. Ye shall have the honour of suffering with and for me, and of exercising the most difficult and heroic acts of Christianity: But to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.* Where he is so far from promising any preferment here in this world, that he bids them prepare for persecutions. He doth not flatter his followers with vain expectations of earthly glories and advantages, but tells them the truth: *In the world ye shall have persecution, and through many tribulations shall ye enter into the kingdom of heaven.* You shall, saith he, drink of my bitter cup, and be overwhelmed with the waters of the proud, as I have been plunged in the waters of Jordan: you shall be partakers of the troubles and afflictions that befall me, and thereby be made in some measure perfect and conformable to my sufferings; by which you shall be no losers, but great gainers.



in the end. But for any worldly privileges of honour and dignity above others, I have no authority to dispose of them, they being left to the disposal of Divine Providence, and shall be given to those for whom the Father hath designed them.

4. To be Christ's disciples, we must deny our righteous selves; that is, we must renounce all righteousness of our own, and desire to be found only in Christ's righteousness. Our own righteousness is attended with many failings and imperfections, yea such as will rather condemn than justify us before God. The prophet Isaiah styles our best righteousness but *filthy rags, and menstruous cloth*; and when we have done our utmost, our Saviour bids us to say, that we are but *unprofitable servants*. Our holiest performances are mingled and polluted with sin, and are more apt to beget abhorrence, than find acceptance with God; for which reason we are rather to renounce, than rely upon them. This is a great piece of self-denial; for men are naturally so in love with themselves and their own righteousness, that they cannot hear of denying or disclaiming of either: they would fain be self-sufficient, and not beholden to another for their justification. It was the pride of the Pharisees to aim at justification by the merit of their own works, and they scorned to hear of such a borrowed and beggarly felicity, that came, like an alms, from the bounty of heaven. These, as the Apostle tells us, *being ignorant of Christ's righteousness, and going about to establish their own, submitted not themselves to the righteousness of God* \*. Whereas the Apostle desired to be  
*found,*

\* Rom. x. 3.

found, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness of God by faith\*. In like manner, though we are to be careful to do good works, and to labour after righteousness to the utmost of our power; yet when we have done all, we must renounce all worth in them, and rely entirely upon the merits of Christ for our justification. Thus we see the first lesson to be learnt of all Christ's disciples, and that is, to *deny themselves*. The

Second is, *to take up the cross*; where by the cross is meant all the troubles, afflictions, and sufferings we may meet with in adhering to Christ and his cause, which we must bear without repining or sinking under them. The way to heaven is not strewed with roses, that yield nothing but sweetness and satisfaction; but set with thorns, that pierce us through with many sorrows: *In the world ye shall have tribulation*, saith our Saviour, John xvi. 33. As we are men, we shall find many crosses in this world; and as Christians, we must look for many more. *The world will love its own; but because ye are chosen out of the world, therefore the world hates you*. So that here we must not think of a paradise of pleasure, but a place of pains and sufferings; nor may we expect to be carried up to heaven in fiery chariots, but in fiery trials; *for through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God*†. So that the sufferings of this life, both inward and outward, in body, goods, or name, are the cross, that we are commanded to take up.

But what is it to take up the cross? why, not to draw any unnecessary trouble upon us, or

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wilfully

\* Phil. iii. 8, 9.

† Acts xiv. 22.



wilfully to run ourselves into danger : for we are bid to *be wise as serpents, as well as harmless as doves* ; and *if we are persecuted in one city to flee to another*. But the sense is, to decline no necessary duty to God or man, for fear of any danger it may expose us to ; but rather to be willing and ready to undergo the greatest sufferings, than to commit the least sin, and to run any hazards rather than omit the smallest duty. If any cross lie in the strait way that leads to life, we are not to leave the narrow path, nor break any enclosures to avoid it, but must patiently take it up and carry it along with us : if, as one hath observed, it be a little heavy at first, it will soon grow lighter, and rather promote than hinder our progress toward heaven.

But here we must not think every trouble we meet with in this world to be the cross of Christ: for some justly suffer for their sins and wilful breaches of the laws of God and man, others suffer for a humour, fancy, or mistaken opinion ; and where it is so, it is their own cross, and not the cross of Christ that lights upon them : *For what glory is it, saith St. Peter, if when ye are buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently ? But if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, that is acceptable with God : For hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps* \*. We may not court the cross, or draw upon us unnecessary sufferings ; for Christ himself prayed, that the bitter cup might pass from him : but we must with him submit to the divine will, and endure any thing rather than sin against God, or wound our own conscience ; *For this is thank-worthy* (saith the Apostle)

\* 1 Pet. ii. 19, 20.

ble) if a man, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

This is the cross that St. Paul gloried in, and the rest of the Apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. It is the cause then, and not barely the suffering that makes the martyr: to suffer in a good cause, is to be a partaker of Christ's sufferings, which is a matter of exceeding great joy: *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ* (saith St. Peter) *happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory, and of God resteth upon you:* But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or busy-body in other mens matters; for such sufferings can afford no comfort here, or reward hereafter: *But if any suffer as a Christian; let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf*\*. In short, we must not omit any duty, or commit any sin, for fear of suffering; but be ever ready, not only to do, but to suffer what we can for the glory of God, and the furtherance of the Gospel. This is the cross that Christ hath borne before us, and expects his disciples should take up and bear after him. And this will lead to the

Third and last qualification of his disciples, which is to follow him: *If any will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me*, where to follow Christ, is,

1. To follow his doctrine. And,
2. To follow his example; that is, to believe as he hath taught us, and to do as he hath practised.

1. Christ being a teacher come from God, his doctrine must be divine, and consequently infallibly true and certain, and therefore worthy of all

\* 1 Pet. iv. 13, 14, &c.



all acceptance; it is our honour to learn of such a master, and our happiness to copy after so heavenly a teacher.

2. And as his doctrine, so his example too is worthy of all imitation: for though no mere man was ever fit to be followed in all things, all men being subject to errors and failings, and the best having vices as well as virtues; yet Christ was so pure and perfect in all his ways, having no sin, nor any guile found in his mouth, that we may safely tread in his steps who never trod awry; we may and ought to receive his doctrine, and in all things follow the example of so unerring a guide: *Be followers of God* (saith St. Paul) *as dear children*\*. *And be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ*†. He would have them to follow Christ absolutely and in all things, but him no farther than he followed Christ; *and he that abideth in him ought so to walk as he walked*‡.

To conclude then, if we will be Christ's disciples or Christians indeed, if we would so come after him here, as to come to him hereafter; let us deny ourselves for him, who so readily denied himself for us, and parted with all that was dear to him for our sake. Let us take up the cross, which he hath so patiently borne before us, and thereby sanctified it to us, and placed it in the way to a never-fading crown. And, lastly, let us follow him in all things wherein he is imitable by us, conforming our lives to the pattern of his most holy life, and to all his carriage toward God and men. And by thus following him in grace here, we shall, ere long, follow him to glory: which God grant, &c.

\* Eph. v. 1.

† 1 Cor. xi. 1.

‡ 1 John ii. 6.

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## On St. Bartholomew's Day.

*August 24th.*

By Dr. DANIEL WATERLAND.

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JOHN, Chap. i. Ver. 47.

*Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.*

THE Apostle Bartholomew is, by good interpreters, supposed to have been this very Nathanael, of whom our Lord here speaks in such high terms of commendation. Nathanael might be the name which he commonly went under before his conversion to Christ, and Bartholomew might be the Christian title, which he assumed afterward.

The memorable character, here given of him, is, that he was *an Israelite indeed*, or true *Israelite, in whom was no guile*: he was a person of great simplicity and integrity; remarkable for his honest and upright heart, his frank and open conversation, and for his plainness and sincerity in all his dealings: he had no sinister or selfish views, no deceit nor craftiness in him: his designs were all just, fair, and honourable; his conduct equal, clear, and uniform; in a word, his tongue, his hand, and his heart, all went together.

Such



Such was his general character; and, by the particular notice which our Blessed Lord was pleased to take of it, we may perceive that he looked upon it as somewhat rare and uncommon, above the ordinary pitch of human virtue. In discoursing farther, my design is,

I. To enquire, how it comes to pass, that guile and insincerity are so apt to prevail amongst men.

II. To set forth the *wisdom* of true *simplicity of mind*, and *integrity of manners*, both with respect to the world that now is, and that which is to come.

I. As to the first particular; if we look back to the original of guile, and search to the bottom of it, we shall find it chiefly owing to that natural selfishness which is, in a manner, born in us, and bred up with us; and which nothing can ever thoroughly correct, or cure, but a deep and due sense of God and religion. Men naturally feel their own cravings and uneasinesses; but they feel not, in like manner, the cravings and uneasinesses of other persons: and therefore they are naturally prompted to indulge themselves as far as they can, though it be at the expence of their neighbours, who have the like inclinations and aversions with them. A little time and experience sufficiently convince every man, that there is no forcing all around him to yield to his single will, or humour; but he is certain to meet with strong resistance and opposition on every side, as often as he directly attempts any thing of that sort. Hence arises a kind of moral necessity of making use of management and address, in order to compass that by wile and artifice,

artifice, which cannot be obtained by open violence. Here lies the foundation of guile, treachery, and deceit. They are the natural result of an overweening self-love, meeting with opposition from without, and not yet restrained by true and right principles from within.

It is one chief aim of the laws of every well-governed society, or community, to bridle, in some measure, the exorbitances of selfishness; that it may not break out to that degree, as totally to destroy or disturb the public harmony: but, notwithstanding all the outward legal restraints that can be enacted, there is still room enough left for guile and treachery to range in. Human laws may be eluded, or perverted; and the men of guile may often manage so artfully, as to turn the very laws themselves, which were made for the protection of innocency, to the oppression or destruction of it: so that the laws of any state are by no means an effectual remedy against guile.

Beside the laws of the land, there is a kind of law of reputation, which generally is a much stricter and closer restraint upon deceitful practices, than the other. Many are afraid of being detected and exposed, if they should deal unhandfomely by their neighbours: and so the tender regard which they bear toward their own reputation, restrains them from several iniquitous practices, which they might otherwise safely venture upon, within the laws of the land. In such cases, where the common courts of judicature can take no cognizance, the tribunal of fame, however,  
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often strikes men with awe : for reputation is a tender point, and a man's livelihood often depends upon his fair and good character : but, though this may be an additional restraint upon guile, and of considerable force ; yet it goes not deep enough to effect any change of heart ; neither does it sufficiently obviate the more refined and exquisite contrivances of human subtilty. Some will lay their insidious schemes with such closeness and secrecy, that it may be next to impossible to detect them : or however to convict them by any clear and certain evidences. Others, taking advantage of their superiority of fortune or station, will boldly carry on their deceitful practices : while those who see them, and suffer by them, are afraid to complain, or so much as to appear sensible of the hardships they lie under, for fear of suffering worse. Others, lastly, who, through the strength of habit and long custom in the arts of guile, are once got beyond the sense of shame, may securely go on in the same track, and even boast of fraud and circumvention, when discovered ; nay, and perhaps may find means to turn the ridicule or disgrace upon the unhappy sufferers. From hence therefore we may perceive, that the law of reputation is no certain, no universal security against the practice of guile.

Neither indeed can any thing be justly looked upon as a sovereign preservative, which shall effectually answer in every respect, excepting only an awful fear and dread of the Divine Majesty, a lively and vigorous expectation of a judgment to come. This religious principle is the only certain and constant secu-

rity against guile : and this will prevail to all intents and purposes, wheresoever it fixes firm root. A man, truly pious and conscientious, will consider that guile is not more odious in the esteem of men, than it is abominable in the sight of God ; and must be one day accounted for before the high and awful tribunal. While he reflects hereupon, and at the same time loves his own soul, he will be sensible that it is not only his duty, but his real and lasting interest, to act always a just, and equal, and generous part with all mankind. He will see good reason for loving his neighbour in like manner as he loves himself ; and so of course will be inclined to deal with others, as he desires to be dealt with. He will be true and faithful in all measures, whether transacted in secret, or in the face of the sun. He will take no unfair advantages of the weakness of one, or of the ignorance of another, or of the necessities of a third, or of any other unhappy circumstances or contingencies. He will be equal and impartial in all his dealings, though it were toward an idiot, or an infant, or other thoughtless, helpless person ; as well as toward the sharpest, and shrewdest, and greatest, whose capacities or resentments he may stand in awe of : and that, because he considers Almighty God as infinitely more discerning and more powerful than all ; and that it is to him we must give account of our dealings with our fellow-creatures. No artifices, no colourings can be of any avail in God's sight ; for God is not mocked : he sees into the inmost recesses of the mind, and searches even the reins and the heart. This consideration strikes at the very  
root



root of all guile and treachery, when nothing else will.

However, from hence may be perceived, how it comes to pass, that guile prevails so widely amongst men : it is, because this world is present, and sensible ; while the other is distant, and mostly out of sight. There are few, in comparison, who retain a lively, constant, prevailing sense of God, and a world to come : and therefore there are but few such Israelites as Nathanael was, *a man in whom was no guile*. Good-nature and common humanity will sometimes go a great way : and if to both be added a certain frankness and nobleness of temper, together with a sense of honour, and a quick perception of shame ; all these in conjunction will almost be sufficient to make up a man without guile. But yet, unless a deep and due sense of religion be superadded to all, the character will not be complete ; neither will the man's other principles be effectual to restrain him from the more refined sort of guile, whenever he has any great advantages to make by it. Trust not too far to any man's natural honesty, or probity, if he appears not, in his general conduct, to have the fear of God before his eyes : for, he that is false to his God, will be false to all the world, as often as any present engaging interest persuades to it, or any strong temptation comes in his way.

I take leave to add, that guile may be often found even under great appearances of religion ; either because men may be hypocrites, or because this very religion may be of the corrupt kind, adulterated with wrong principles ;

ples; or because, at the best, it amounts only to a faint and feeble principle of life, lodging more in the head, than in the heart. From whence again we may infer, that the character of the text is the more rare and uncommon, since none but the religious can ever fully come up to it; and not all they, but those only who have the honour and the happiness to be deeply tinged with piety, and who constantly make it the ruling principle of their hearts and lives.

Having thus largely accounted for the prevailing growth and influence of guile and insincerity, I proceed now secondly,

II. To set forth the wisdom and excellence of sincere and upright conduct, both with respect to the world that now is, and to that which is to come.

I. No doubt but many and great worldly advantages may ordinarily be obtained by the practice of guile: otherwise, there would be no temptation to it, or none great enough to draw such numbers into it. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged likewise, that there are ordinarily many and great worldly advantages arising from honest and sincere conduct; so that, upon the whole, it may justly be questioned, whether the men of guile are generally the greatest gainers, even with respect to this present life. It is true, we may sometimes observe immense riches gathered by dishonest or treacherous practices; and it is certain, that crafty deceivers do sometimes raise their own fortunes upon the ruins of much better men: but such instances may perhaps be justly looked upon as a few glitter-



ing prizes among a multitude of blanks: for it is certain, on the other hand, that great numbers are daily undone by dishonest courses; while their indirect practices first blow up their credit, and soon after sink the men. I believe it will be generally allowed, as to matters of trade and commerce, that honesty is, for the most part, the truest policy, the surest way to thrive. One that is known to make a conscience of telling the truth, who is remarkably faithful in all his dealings, who is exact and punctual in his contracts or covenants, who is content with moderate and reasonable gains, and who scorns to take any indirect or mean advantages; I say, such a person as I have here described, will, generally speaking, find favour amongst all men; and, by the strength of his friendships, and God's blessing upon them, will be able to bear himself up in the world: whereas, when once a person begins to be marked as a dishonest, or designing man, few will chuse to have dealings with him; few will contribute to support or countenance him. In the general therefore, and in the ordinary course of affairs, a plain honest man appears to stand upon a surer foot, than a master of guile; and is much more likely to thrive and prosper in the world.

Another considerable advantage which he has, lies in the ease, and peace, and tranquillity of his mind. He has no laboured schemes to lay, no perplexing difficulties to torment him, no contradictions in conduct to reconcile; but his way is plain, easy, and clear before him. He can meet his acquaintance with a free and open countenance, with a pleasing and  
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cheerful aspect. As his conduct is all fair and clean, and he is conscious of it, he is under no pain or uneasiness about future discoveries, or after-reckonings, nor about any the most prying or even malicious enquiries. Search his conduct to the utmost, and the better will it appear: his righteousness, upon the scrutiny, will in the last issue be made as clear as the light, and his just dealing as the noon-day.

Such is the security and comfort of the upright man (generally speaking) and there is no other pleasure of life comparable to it. This I take to be almost universally true, with respect to that kind of honesty of which I am now speaking, such as concerns matters of property, or belongs to trade and commerce. But withal I must own, and it may not be improper here to observe, that there is another kind of honesty which often lies under hardships, and does not ordinarily meet with such favourable acceptance in the world. I mean the honesty of resisting importunate solicitations to something ill, and preserving a conscience clear of all undue compliances. There are few persons of a general acquaintance, or of any large scene of business, who may not frequently upon occasion find, that some designing man or other having sinister ends to serve, for which they want instruments, may importune them vehemently to do wrong things. If an honest man declines and hangs back in such cases (as in duty he is bound to do) he is certain to get ill-will for the time, and both to lose friends, and to raise to himself enemies. Most of us have either relations, or benefactors, or

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allies,



allies, or companions to please, who may severally in their turns request improper favours; and at the same time may be so partial to their own schemes, or interests, as not to bear a repulse with any candour or patience. When party-differences happen to run high, such difficulties will occur very frequently: and they often prove sore trials upon honest and upright men, who have no guile of their own; and who cannot, with a safe conscience, consent to be made instruments to the guile of others, or to be partakers of other mens sins. If they are persecuted, or maligned for their non-compliance in such cases (as commonly happens), they must be content to bear it as becomes Christians. Virtue would be no virtue, or very slight, if it met with no trials, to exercise, improve, and perfect it. In such instances chiefly is the proof made, whether we are really religious, or are only men-pleasers; whether we value the solid and lasting praise of God, or the vain and transient caresses of men. Honesty, in this view, may sometimes, perhaps often, fail of its due reward here, but it is certain to have it in full measure hereafter.

2. Therefore, secondly, the wisdom and excellency of a sincere and upright conduct, with respect to a life to come, is very plain and indisputable. It is securing the main chance, and laying up for eternity. Providing things honest in the sight of all men (whether men observe it, or not) will infallibly recommend a man to God, who sees it, and marks it, and will finally reward it. The securing this great point

point is true wisdom, as it is pitching upon the noblest and best end, and pursuing it by fair and just means. An honest and good heart is the top-perfection of man, and is, in the sight of God, of the greatest price. With persons so qualified, God chuses to abide here; and such shall also eternally abide with him hereafter. There will be no guile or hypocrisy in the regions of the blessed. Those ill-natured qualities are calculated only for the low interests of this life (and not for them always) but will have no place in the other. All things are naked and open to God now, and will be also both to men and angels hereafter. There is nothing hid, but what shall then be revealed; nor any thing kept secret, but what shall then be made known: for, God will make manifest the counsels of the heart. How mean, how despicable will all deceitful contrivances, and all ungenerous practices appear at that day; when every mask and dissimulation shall be thrown off, and every studied refinement of guile and malice disclosed, and nothing but sincere and undisguised honesty will be found able to stand the test. Then will be seen what complicated folly there always is in every the most artful contrivance of guile; and what a depth of wisdom and good sense there constantly is in plain and sincere dealing.

I do not say, that the innocency of the dove may not be frequently found, where the wisdom of the serpent may be wanting. An honest heart, and a discerning head, do not always go together: there may be perfect sincerity, humanly speaking, where there is not perfect wisdom.



wisdom. But this I may presume to think and say, that the first and best part of wisdom always goes along with sincere and upright conduct. There is a wise choice made of the noblest and best end, and due provision laid for the main thing, which, in effect, is every thing.

We may observe, in our Blessed Lord, a bright example of the most perfect innocency, joined with consummate wisdom. No guile was found in his mouth, or in his life; no slip, no failure in point of discretion, through his whole conduct. Numberless traps and snares were laid for him, to entangle him in his talk, or to over-reach him in business: but he had wisdom sufficient to defeat them all, and even to turn the insidious craftiness of his adversaries upon their own heads. This he was able to do; for he was God, as well as man. He is a finished pattern for his disciples to copy after in some measure, though never to come up to. Their integrity, after all, must come vastly short of his; and so must their wisdom also: for we can neither resemble the dove, nor the serpent, to any such degree of perfection, as he did. Nevertheless, we ought to use our best endeavours to attain to such perfection as we may, in both respects. Or, however we may be found wanting in point of wisdom, or capacity, which is no crime to fail in, let us labour to be as exact as possible, in point of sincerity, which is more in our own power. In order thereunto, give me leave, by way of application of what hath been said,

III. To

III. To subjoin a few plain and brief directions, for our improvement in so admirable a quality.

1. Let no one ever persuade you, that the practice of guile and circumvention is any argument of superior parts, or understanding. It is the easiest thing in the world to be deceitful and disingenuous. Children are capable of it, soon after they can speak: and they will daily improve in it, by mere instinct of nature, if not seasonably restrained by wholesome discipline, or wise instruction. Persons of very low capacities are often capable of a great deal of low cunning, when they are scarcely found capable of any thing beside. And though, sometimes, men of very bright parts may be observed, under strong attachments to this world, to take into the ways of guile; yet it must be owned to be a great disparagement to their parts, that they do so: and had they sense, or consideration sufficient to look forward, to the end of things, and to lay all circumstances together well and wisely, they would abhor that very guile, of which now perhaps they are proud. Honesty and wisdom are but words of the same import in Holy Scripture, and mean the same thing; because, in reality, there is no true wisdom, but in true integrity.

2. Let no one ever be offended or chagrined, if he should any time observe, that some particular persons thrive and prosper by fraud, guile, or treachery. Such instances are rare in comparison, as I before hinted: and for one that grows considerable in such a way,



hundreds perhaps fail and sink in their circumstances by these very means. Beside, what enjoyment have those few thriving deceivers in their ill-gotten advantages? Little, very probably, or none. But suppose the very best we can imagine in their favour; yet Scripture more than once assures us, that in the last issue, even the prosperity of fools destroys them. Were they to gain the whole world by unrighteous practices, it would profit them nothing; since in the last result, they are certain to lose their own souls, and to perish utterly.

3. Let not the sense of any perplexing straits or difficulties ever move you to go out of the plain road of duty, for the sake of any present relief. Those are temptations which Satan throws in our way, and by which he leads the unthinking into the crooked paths of guile and dishonesty. Perhaps, by some convenient use of fraud, some seasonable treachery, a man may rid himself at once of some pressing difficulties: but then, let it be considered on the other hand, that this is only serving a present exigency, to lay in for future troubles, and future repentance; and is losing more in the general, than can be gained in the particular instance. Let a man be content, in such cases, to venture no further for the extricating himself out of difficulties, than he honestly and justly may; leaving the rest to God, who often relieves good men in the greatest extremities, and works their deliverance in marvellous ways, such as they could neither foresee, nor so much as imagine.

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4thly and lastly, If any inviting opportunities should offer, as sometimes happens, that by once or twice straining a point, and breaking through the unerring rules of Christian sincerity, you might make some very considerable advantage, to set you, as it were, up in the world ever after; reject the alluring bait at once, with the utmost horror and disdain. Consider, not so much what may flatter your present desires in point of interest or worldly honour, as what is strictly just, honest, and fair, and will bring you solid and lasting felicity. Consider not consequences in a secular account, when strict duty is concerned. Leave the issue of all in God's hands; only, do you what is right, and what it becomes you to do. To take into any indirect, unjustifiable courses, is to throw yourself at once out of God's favour and protection, and is renouncing all reasonable claim to his blessings here, or hereafter. Remember the pious and prudent resolution of holy Job: *Till I die (says he) I will not remove my integrity from me; — my heart shall not reproach me, so long as I live* \*. This noble resolution he held to, as his sheet-anchor, to his dying day: in this was he happy even amidst his troubles, much more when they were over: and by adhering to this principle, he is now a blessed saint above; as well as our Nathanael, of whom our Blessed Lord hath given such an excellent character.

Learn we from such admirable examples, to be true and faithful in all that we say, and in all that we do; deceiving no man, beguiling

\* Job xxxvii. 5, 6.



ing no man to his detriment ; punctual to our word and promise, much more to our oaths ; firm and constant to our just engagements ; honest and impartial in all our dealings ; every way behaving, as becometh men professing godliness, *Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile.*



## On the Fire of London.

September 2.

Preached before the House of Commons,  
October 10th, 1666.

By Bishop STILLINGFLEET.

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AMOS, Chap. iv. Ver. 11.

*I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a fire-brand plucked out of the burning : yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.*

**I**T is but a very little time since you met together in this place to lament the remainders of a raging pestilence, which the last year destroyed so many thousand inhabitants of the late great and famous city : and now God hath given us another sad occasion for our fasting and humiliation, by suffering a devouring fire to break forth and consume so many of her habitations \*. As though the infected air had been too kind and partial, and, like Saul to the Amalekites, had only destroyed *the vile and refuse*, and spared *the greatest of the people* ; as though the grave had surfeited with the bodies of the dead, and were loth to go in the execution

\* These awful events are circumstantially related in *Noorthouck's History of London*, 4to. 1773. Book. I. ch. 14.



execution of God's displeasure; he hath employed a more furious element, which by its merciless and devouring flames might in a more lively manner represent unto us the kindling of his wrath against us. And that by a fire, which began with that violence, and spread with that horror, and raged with that fury, and continued for so long a time with that irresistible force; that it might justly fill the beholders with confusion, the hearers of it with amazement, and all of us with a deep and humble sense of those sins which have brought down the judgments of God in so severe a manner in the midst of us.

For whatever arguments or reasons we can imagine that should compose the minds of men to a sense of their own or others calamities, or excite them to an apprehension of the wrath of God as the cause of them, or quicken them to an earnest supplication to him for mercy, they do all eminently concur in the sad occasion of this day's solemnity. For if either compassion would move, or fear awaken, or interest engage us to any of these, it is hard to conceive there should be an instance of a more efficacious nature, than that is which we this day bewail. For who can behold the ruins of so great a city, and not have his bowels of compassion moved toward it? Who can have any sense of the anger of God discovered in it, and not have his fear awakened by it? Who can (as we ought all) look upon it as a judgment of universal influence on the whole nation, and not think himself concerned to implore the mercy of heaven toward us? For certainly, howsoever we may vainly flatter and deceive  
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ourselves, these are no common indications of the frowns of heaven ; nor are they merely intended as the expressions of God's severity toward that city which hath suffered so much by them ; but the strokes which fall upon the head, though they light upon that only, are designed for the punishment of the whole body.

Were there nothing else but a bare permission of Divine Providence as to these things, we could not reasonably think, but that God must needs be very angry with us, when he suffers two such dreadful calamities to tread almost upon each others heels ; that no sooner had death taken away such multitudes of our inhabitants, but a fire follows it to consume our habitations. A fire, so dreadful in its appearance, in its rage and fury, and in all the dismal consequences of it (which we cannot yet be sufficiently apprehensive of) that on that very account we may justly *lie down in our shame, and our confusion cover us: because God hath covered the daughter of Sion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven to earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger* \*. For such was the violence and fury of the flames, that they have not only defaced the beauty of the city, and humbled the pride and grandeur of it ; not only stained its glory, and consumed its palaces : but have made the houses of God themselves a heap of ruins, and a spectacle of desolation.

And what then can we propose to ourselves as arguments of God's severe displeasure against

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\* Lam. ii. 1.



us, which we have not either already felt, or have just cause to fear are coming upon us without a speedy and sincere amendment? If a sword abroad and pestilence at home, if fire in our houses and death in our streets, if foreign wars and domestic factions, if a languishing state and a discontented people, if the ruins of the city and poverty of the country, may make us sensible how sad our condition at present is, how much worse it may be (if God in his mercy prevent it not) we shall all surely think we have reason enough this day to lay to heart *the evil of our doings which have brought all these things upon us, and abhor ourselves, repenting in dust and ashes.* That would seem indeed to bear some analogy with the present ruins of the city, and the calamities we lie under at this time; but God will more easily dispense with the pompous shews, and solemn garbs of our humiliation; if our hearts bleed within for our former impieties, and our repentance discovers its sincerity, by bringing us to that temper; that, *though we have done iniquity, we will do so no more.* That is the true and proper end, which Almighty God aims at, in all his judgments: he takes no delight in hurling the world into confusions, and turning cities into ruinous heaps, and making whole countries a desolation: but when he sees it necessary to vindicate the honour of his justice to the world, he doth it with that severity that may make us apprehend his displeasure, and yet with that mercy which may encourage us to repent and *return unto the Lord.* Thus we find in the instances recorded in the text, when some cities were consumed by him; so  
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that as far as concerned them, they were made like to Sodom and Gomorrah: yet he doth it with that kindness to the inhabitants, that *they are plucked as firebrands out of the burning*: and therefore he looks upon it as a frustrating the design both of his justice, and of his mercy, when he is fain to conclude with that sad reflection on their incorrigibleness: *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord*. Thus ye see what the design and scope of the words is, which I have read unto you, wherein we may consider,

I. The severity of the judgment which God was pleased to execute upon them. *I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah*.

II. The mixture of his mercy in the midst of his severity, *and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning*.

III. The incorrigibleness of the people notwithstanding both. *Yet have ye not, &c.* In the first we have God's rod lifted up to strike, in the second we have God's hand stretched out to save, yet neither of these would make them sensible of their disobedience: though their cities were overthrown for their sakes, though they themselves escaped not for their own sakes, but for his mercies sake only whom they had so highly provoked; *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord*. I am sure I may say of the two former parts of the text, as our Saviour doth in another cause, *This day hath this Scripture been fulfilled among you*: we have seen a sad instance of God's severity, a city almost wholly consumed as Sodom and Gomorrah, and a great expression of his kindness, *the inhabitants*



*inhabitants saved, as firebrands plucked out of the burning.* O let it never be said that the last part of the words is fulfilled too, *yet have ye not returned unto me, &c.* which, that it may not be, I shall first consider the severity of God in his judgment this day, and then discover the mixture of his kindness with it, and the result of both will be the unreasonableness of obstinate disobedience after them.

1. The severity of the judgment here expressed: which, though we take it not in reference to the persons of men, but to the cities wherein they dwelt, as it seems to be understood not only by the original wherein the words relating to persons are left out; but by the following clause, expressing their preservation: yet we shall find the judgment to be severe enough, in regard, 1. Of the nature and kind of it. 2. The series and order of it. 3. The causes moving to it. 4. The author of it. *I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew, &c.*

1. The nature and kind of it: we can imagine nothing more severe when we consider what it is set forth by, the most unparalleled judgment we read of, viz. the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by a fire from heaven. Although in all circumstances the instance might not come up to the parallel, yet in several respects there might be so sad a desolation, that any other example but that might fall beneath the greatness and severity of it. And we may better understand of how sad and dreadful a nature such a judgment must be, if we consider it with relation to the suddenness and unexpectedness of it, to the force and violence of it, and  
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to all that sad train of circumstances which attend and follow it.

1. The suddenness and unexpectedness of it ; as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, *i. e.* when they least of all looked for such a desolation. For *thus it was in the days of Lot* (as our Saviour tells us) *they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they build- ed; but the same day that Lot went out of So- dom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all* \*. They were all im- mersed either in their pleasures or in their bu- siness ; they little thought of destruction being so near them as it proved to be : thus it was with the Jews in their first and latter destruc- tion both of their city and country ; they were as high and as confident of the contrary, as might be, to the very last ; nothing could per- suade them that their temple or their city should be burnt with fire, till they saw them flaming before their eyes. Thus Josephus observes of his countrymen, *that in the midst of all their miseries they had no kind of sense at all of their sins, but were as proud, presumptuous and ar- rogant, as if all things went well with them ; and were like to do so* †. They thought God could not possibly punish such a people as they were in such a manner ; they could easily have believed it of any other people but themselves : but that God should punish his own people in covenant with him, that judgment should begin at the house of God, that they who had loved to be called by his name, should be made ex-

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\* Luke xvii. 28, 29. † Ἦν γὰρ αὐτοῖς μετάνοια μὲν ἐδεμία τῶν κακῶν, ἀλαζυνεία δὲ ὡς ἐπ' ἀγαθοῖς. de bell. Jud. l. 7. c. 14.



amples to all other nations: this seemed so harsh and incredible that by no means could they entertain it. But God and wise men too thought otherwise of them than they did of themselves: they could not but see an outward shew of religion joined with a deep and subtil hypocrisy; there being among them an heap of pride and luxury, of fraud and injustice, of sedition and faction gilded over with a fair shew of greater zeal for God and his glory: which that impartial historian (as one who knew them well) hath described at large: and although they could not believe that such heavy judgments should befall them, yet others did not only believe, but tremble at the apprehensions of them.

Who among all the citizens of London could have been persuaded, but the day before the fire broke out, nay when they saw the flames for near a day together, that ever in four days time not a fourth part of the city should be left standing? For when were they ever more secure and inapprehensive of their danger than at this time? They had not been long returned to their houses, which the plague had driven them from, and now they hoped to make some amends for the loss of their trade before; but they returned home with the same sins they carried away with them; like new moons, they had a new face and appearance, but the same spots remained still: or it may be, increased by that scum they had gathered in the countries where they had been. Like beasts of prey that had been chained up so long till they were hunger-bitten, when they once got loose they ran with that violence and greediness to their ways

ways of gain, as though nothing could ever satisfy them. But that which betrayed them to so much security, was their late deliverance from so sweeping a judgment as the plague had been to the city and suburbs of it: they could by no means think, when they had all so lately escaped the grave, that the city itself should be so near being buried in its own ruins; that the fire which had missed their blood, should seize upon their houses; that there should be no other way to purge the infected air, but by the flames of the whole city. Thus when the mariners have newly escaped a wreck at sea, the fears of which have a long time deprived them of their wonted rest, they think they may securely lie down and sleep, till it may be another storm overtake and sink them. We see then there is neither piety nor wisdom in so much security when a great danger is over, for we know not but that very security itself may provoke God to send a greater. And no kind of judgments are so dreadful and amazing, as those which come most unexpectedly upon men; for these betray the succours which reason offers, they infatuate mens councils, weaken their courage, and deprive them of that presence of mind which is necessary at such a time for their own and the public interest. And there needs no more to let us know how severe such a judgment must be, when it comes upon men in so sudden and unexpected a manner; but that is not all, for the severity of it lies further,

2. In the force and violence of it: and surely that was very great which consumed four



cities to nothing in so short a time, when God did *pluere gehennam de cælo*, as one expresses it, rained down hell-fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And this is that which some think is called *the vengeance of eternal fire, which all those in Sodom and Gomorrah are said to suffer* \*: *i. e.* a fire which consumed, till there was nothing left to be consumed by it. Not but that these wicked persons did justly suffer the vengeance of an eternal fire in another life, but the Apostle seems to set out and paint forth to us that in the life to come, by the force and violence of that fire which destroyed those cities; and it would be harsh to say, that all who were involved in that common calamity (who yet were innocent as to the great abominations of those places, viz. the infants there destroyed) must be immediately sentenced to eternal misery. But although God since that perpetual monument of his justice in the destruction of those cities hath not by such an immediate fire from heaven consumed and razed out the very foundations of other cities; yet at sometimes there are fires which break out and rage with a more than ordinary violence, and will not yield to those attempts for quenching them, which at other times may be attended with great success. Such might that great fire in Rome be in Nero's time, which whether begun casually, or by design (which was disputed then, as it hath been about others since) did presently spread itself with greater speed over the cirque (as the † historian tells us) than the wind itself, and never left burning, till of fourteen regions in Rome, but four were left

\* Jude 7.

† Tacit. Ann. xv.

left entire. Such might that be in the emperor Titus his time, which lasted three days and nights, and was so irresistible in its fury, that the historian tells us *it was certainly more than an ordinary fire* \*. Such might that be in the same city in the time of Commodus, which though all the art and industry imaginable were used for the quenching it, yet it burnt, till it had consumed, besides the Temple of Peace, the fairest houses and palaces of the city, which, on that account, the historians attribute to more than natural causes †. Such might that be (which comes the nearest of any I have met with, to that fire we this day lament the effects of) I mean that at Constantinople, which happened ‡ A. D. 465, in the beginning of September: it broke forth by the water side, and raged with that horrible fury for four days together, that it burnt down the greatest part of the city, and was so little capable of resistance that as § Evagrius tells us, the strongest houses were but *ὡσπερ τι φρυγανῶδες*, *like so much dried stubble before it*; by which means the whole city was, as he calls it, *οἰκτρότατον θέαμα*, *a most miserable and doleful spectacle*; so that, as || Baronius expresses it, *that city which before was accounted the wonder of the world, was made like unto Sodom and Gomorrah*. Such likewise might those two great fires have been

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which

\* Τὸτό τε τὸ κακὸν ἐκ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ δαιμόνιον ἐγένετο. Xiphil. in Epit. Dion. in Tito. p. 227.

† Ὅθεν καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἔργον ἐξεθειάσθη πισευόντων κατ' ἐκείνη καίρῳ τῶν τότε ἀνθρώπων, ὅτι γνώμη θεῶν καὶ δυναμει ἤρξατό τε τὸ πῦρ καὶ ἐπαύσατο. Herodian in Commod. hist. l. 1. p. 22. v. Xiphil. ad fin. Commodi.

‡ Niceph. l. 15. c. 21. § Evagr. l. 2. cap. 13.

|| Baron. Tom. 5. A. 465. 1.



which have formerly burnt down great part of the then city of London; but neither of them come near to the dreadfulneſs of this, conſidering how much bigger the habitations of the city were now, and how much greater the riches of it than could be imagined at thoſe times. How great muſt we conceive the force of this fire to have been, which having at firſt gotten a-head where there was little means of reſiſting it, and much fuel to increaſe it; from thence it ſpread itſelf both with and againſt the wind: till it had gained ſo conſiderable a force that it deſpiſed all the reſiſtance could be made by the ſtrength of the buildings which ſtood in its way; and when it had once ſubdued the ſtrong-eſt and the tall-eſt of them, it then roared like the waves of the ſea, and made its way through all the leſſer obſtacles, and might have gone on ſo far, till it had laid this city level with the ruins of the other, had not he who ſets the bounds to the ocean, and ſaith *thus far ſhalt thou go and no further*, put a ſtop to it in thoſe places which were as ready to have yielded up themſelves to the rage of it, as any which had been conſumed before.

3. The ſeverity of it will yet more appear from all the dreadful circumſtances which attend and follow it. Could you ſuppoſe yourſelves in the miſt of thoſe cities which were conſumed by fire from heaven, when it had ſeized upon their dwellings, O what cries and lamentations, what yellings and ſhrickings might ye then have heard among them! We may well think how dreadful thoſe were, when we do but conſider how ſad the circumſtances were

were of the fire we mourn for this day. When it began like Sampson to break in pieces all the means of resisting it, and carried before it not only the gates, but the churches and most magnificent structures of the city, what horror and confusion may we then imagine had seized upon the spirits of the citizens; what destruction in their councils, what paleness in their countenances, what panting at their hearts, what an universal consternation might have been then seen upon the minds of men? But O the sighs and tears, the frights and amazements, the miscarriages, nay the deaths of some of the weaker sex at the terror and apprehension of it! O the hurry and useless pains, the alarms and tumults, the mutual hinderances of each other that were among men at the beholding the rage and fury of it! There we might have seen women weeping for their children, for fear of their being trod down in the press, or lost in the croud of people, or exposed to the violence of the flames; husbands more solicitous for the safety of their wives and children, than their own; the soldiers running to their swords, when there was more need of buckets; the tradesmen loading their backs with that which had gotten possession of their hearts before. Then we might have heard some complaining thus of themselves: O that I had been as careful of laying up treasures in heaven, as I have been upon earth, I had not been under such fears of losing them as now I am! if I had served God as faithfully as I have done the world, he would never have left me as now that is like to do. What a fool have I been who have spent all my precious time



for the gaining of that which may now be lost in an hour's time! If these flames be so dreadful, what are those which are reserved for them who love the world more than God! If none can come near the heat of this fire, who can dwell with *everlasting burnings*! O what madness then will it be to sin any more wilfully against that God who is a consuming fire, infinitely more dreadful than this can be! Farewel then all ye deceitful vanities: now I understand thee and myself better, O bewitching world, than to fix my happiness in these any more. I will henceforth learn so much wisdom to lay up my treasures there where neither moths can corrupt them, nor thieves steal them, nor fire consume them. O how happy would London be, if this were the effect of her flames on the minds of all her inhabitants! She might then rise with a greater glory, and her inward beauty would outshine her outward splendour, let it be as great as we can wish or imagine.

But in the mean time who can behold her present ruins, without paying some tears as due to the sadness of the spectacle, and more to the sins which caused them? If that city were able to speak out of its ruins, what sad complaints would it make of all those impieties which have made her so miserable? If it had not been (might she say) for the pride and luxury, the ease and delicacy of some of my inhabitants, the covetousness, the fraud, the injustice of others, the debaucheries of the profane, the open factions and secret hypocrisy of too many pretending to greater sanctity, my beauty had not been thus turned into ashes, nor my glory into those ruins which make my  
enemies

enemies rejoice, my friends to mourn, and all stand amazed at the beholding of them. Look now upon me, you who so lately admired the greatness of my trade, the riches of my merchants, the number of my people, the conveniency of my churches, the multitude of my streets, and see what desolations sin hath made in the earth. Look upon me, and then tell me whether it be nothing to dally with heaven, to make a mock at sin, to slight the judgments of God, and abuse his mercies, and after all the attempts of heaven to reclaim a people from their sins, to remain still the same that ever they were? Was there no way to expiate your guilt but by my misery? Had the leprosy of your sins so fretted in my walls, that there was no cleansing them, but by the flames which consume them? Must I mourn in my dust and ashes for your iniquities, while you are so ready to return to the practice of them? Have I suffered so much by reason of them, and do you think to escape yourselves? Can you then look upon my ruins with hearts as hard and unconcerned as the stones which lie in them? If you have any kindness for me, or for yourselves; if you ever hope to see my breaches repaired, my beauty restored, my glory advanced, look on London's ruins and repent. Thus would she bid her inhabitants not weep for her miseries, but for their own sins; for if never any sorrow was like to her sorrow, it is because never any sins were like to their sins. Not as though they were only the sins of the city, which have brought this evil upon her, no, but as far as the judgment reaches, so great hath the compass of the sins been, which have provoked  
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God to make her an example of his justice. And I fear the effects of London's calamity will be felt all the nation over. For, considering the present languishing condition of this nation, it will be no easy matter to recover the blood and spirits which have been lost by this fire. So that whether we consider the sadness of those circumstances which accompanied the rage of the fire, or those which respect the present miseries of the city, or the general influence those will have upon the nation, we cannot easily conceive what judgment could in so critical a time have befallen us, which had been more severe for the kind and nature of it, than this hath been.

2. We consider it in the series and order of it. We see by the text, this comes in the last place, as a reserve, when nothing else would do any good upon them: It is *extrema medicina*, as \* St. Hierom saith, the last attempt that God uses to reclaim a people by, and if these causticks will not do, it is to be feared he looks upon the wounds as incurable. He had sent a *famine* before, v. 6. a *drought*, v. 7, 8. *blasting and mildew*, v. 9. *the pestilence after the manner of Egypt*, v. 10. *the miseries of war*, in the same verse. And when none of these would work that effect upon them, which they were designed for, then he comes to this last way of punishing before a final destruction, *he overthrew some of their cities as he had overthrown Sodom and Gomorrah*. God forbid, we should be so near a final subversion, and utter desolation, as the ten tribes were, when none of these things would bring them

to repentance ; but yet the method God hath used with us seems to bode very ill in case we do not at last return to the Lord. For it is not only agreeable to what is here delivered as the course God used to reclaim the Israelites, but to what is reported by the most faithful historian of those times of the degrees and steps that God made before the ruins of the British nation. For Gildas\* tells us the decay of it began by civil wars among themselves, and high discontents remaining as the consequents of them ; after this an universal decay and poverty among them ; after that, nay, during the continuance of it, wars with the Picts, and Scots their inveterate enemies ; but no sooner had they a little breathing space, but they return to their luxury and other sins again ; then God sends among them a consuming pestilence, which destroyed an incredible number of people. When all this would not do, those whom they trusted most to, betrayed them, and rebelled against them, by whose means, not only the cities were burnt with fire, but the whole island was turned almost into one continued flame. The issue of all which at last was, that their country was turned to a desolation, the ancient inhabitants driven out, or destroyed, and their former servants, but now their bitter enemies, possessing their habitations. May God avert the omen from us at this day. We have smarted by civil wars, and the dreadful effects of them ; we yet complain of great discontents and poverty as great as them ; we have inveterate enemies combined abroad against us ; we have very lately suffered under a pestilence as great almost as any we read of, and now  
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\* Gildas de excid. Brit.



the great city of our nation burnt down by a dreadful fire. And what do all these things mean? and what will the issue of them be? though that be locked up in the councils of heaven, yet we have just cause to fear, if it be not our speedy amendment, it may be our ruin.

And they who think that incredible, let them tell me whether two years since, they did not think it altogether as improbable, that in the compass of the two succeeding years, above a hundred thousand persons should be destroyed by the plague in London and other places, and the city itself should be burnt to the ground? And if our fears do not, I am sure our sins may tell us, that these are but the fore-runners of greater calamities, in case there be not a timely reformation of ourselves. And although God may give us some intermissions of punishments, yet at last he may, as the Roman consul expressed it, pay us *intercalatæ pænæ usuram*, that which may make amends for all his abatements, and give us full measure according to that of our sins, *pressed down, shaken together, and running over*. Which leads to the third particular.

3. The causes moving God to so much severity in his judgments, which are the greatness of the sins committed against him. So this prophet tells us, that the true account of all God's punishments is to be fetched from the sins of the people, Amos i. 3. *For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof*: so it is said of Gaza, ver. 6. of Tyrus, ver. 9. of Edom, ver. 11. of Ammon, ver. 13. Moab, ch. ii. 1. Judah, ver. 4. and at last Israel, ver. 6. And it is observable  
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of every one of these, that when God threatens to punish them for the greatness of their iniquities, and the multitude of their transgressions, which is generally supposed to be meant by the three transgressions and the four, he doth particularly threaten to send a fire among them to consume the houses and the palaces of their cities. So to Damascus, chap. i. 4. to Gaza, ver. 7. to Tyrus, ver. 10. to Edom, ver. 12. to Ammon, ver. 14. to Moab, ch. ii. ver. 2. to Judah, ver. 5. *I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem:* and Israel in the words of the text. This is a judgment then, which when it comes in its fury, gives us notice to how great a height our sins are risen; especially when it hath so many dreadful forerunners, as it had in Israel, and hath had among ourselves. When the *red horse* hath marched furiously before it all bloody with the effects of a civil war, and the *pale horse* hath followed after the other with *death* upon his back, and the *grave* at his heels, and after both these, those come, *out of whose mouth issues fire, and smoke, and brimstone*, it is then time for the inhabitants of the earth, *to repent of the work of their hands*. But it is our great unhappiness, that we are apt to impute these great calamities to any thing rather than to our sins; and thereby we hinder ourselves from the true remedy, because we will not understand the cause of our distemper. Though God hath not sent prophets among us, to tell us for such and such sins I will send such and such judgments upon you, yet where we observe the parallel between the sins and the punishments agreeable with what we find recorded in Scripture, we have reason to say,  
that



that those sins were not only the antecedents, but the causes of those punishments which followed after them. And that because the reason of punishment was not built upon any particular relation between God and the people of Israel, but upon reasons common to all mankind: yet with this difference, that the greater the mercies were which any people enjoyed, the sooner was the measure of their iniquities filled up, and the severer were the judgments when they came upon them. This our prophet gives an account of, chap. iii. 2. *You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities.* So did God punish Tyre and Damascus, as well as Israel and Judah; but his meaning is, he would punish them sooner, he would punish them more severely. I wish we could be brought once to consider what influence piety and virtue hath upon the good of a nation; if we did, we should not only live better ourselves, but our kingdom and nation might flourish more than otherwise we are like to see it do. Which is a truth hath been so universally received among the wise men of all ages, that one of the Roman historians, though of no very severe life himself, yet imputes the decay of the Roman state not to chance or fortune, or some unhidden causes (which the Atheism of our age would presently do) but to the general looseness of mens lives, and corruption of their manners. And it was the grave observation \* of one of the bravest captains ever the Roman state had, “ that it was impossible “ for any state to be happy, *stantibus mœnibus*, “ *ruentibus moribus*, though their walls were “ firm,

\* Scipio apud Aug. de Civ. D. l. i. c. 33.

“ firm, if their manners were decayed.” But it is our misery, that our walls and our manners are fallen together, or rather the latter undermined the former. They are our sins which have drawn so much of our blood, and infected our air, and added the greatest fuel to our flames.

But it is not enough in general to declaim against our sins, but we must search out particularly those predominant vices, which by their boldness and frequency have provoked God thus to punish us; and as we have hitherto observed a parallel between the judgments of Israel in this chapter, and our own, so I am afraid we shall find too sad a parallel between their sins and ours too. Three sorts of sins are here spoken of in a peculiar manner, as the causes of their severe punishments: their luxury and intemperance, their covetousness and oppression, and their contempt of God and his laws, and I doubt we need not make a very exact scrutiny to find out these in a high degree among ourselves: and I wish it were as easy to reform them, as to find them out.

1. Luxury and intemperance; that we meet with in the first verse, both in the compellation, *Ye kine of Basban*, and in their behaviour, *which say to their masters, bring and let us drink. Ye kine of Basban, loquitur ad principes Israel, & optimates quosque decem tribuum*, saith St. Hierom; he speaks to the *princes of Israel, and the chief of all the ten tribes*; those which are fed in the richest pastures, such as those of Basban were. Who are more fully described by the prophet in this sixth chapter. They are the men *who are at ease in Sion*, ver. 1. *they put far away from them the evil day*, ver. 3. *they lie upon*  
beds



beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall, ver. 4. they chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music like David, ver. 5. they drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments, but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. The meaning of all which is, they minded nothing but ease, softness, and pleasure, but could not endure to hear of the calamities which were so near them. Nothing but mirth, and jollity, and riot, and feasting, and evil consequences of these were to be seen or heard among them. Their delicate souls were presently ruffled and disturbed at the discourse of any thing but matters of courtship, address and entertainment. Any thing that was grave and serious, though ever so necessary, and of the greatest importance, was put off, as Felix put off St. Paul, to a more convenient time : especially if it threatened miseries to them, and appeared with a countenance sadder than their own. These were the kine of Bashan, who were full of ease and wantonness, and never thought of the day of slaughter, which the other were the certain forerunner of. Symmachus renders it, αἱ βόες εὐτροφοί, which others apply to the rich citizens of Samaria ; I am afraid we may take it in either sense without a solæcism. “ *Bring and let us drink,*” which, as St. Hierom goes on, “ *ebrietatem significat in vino, & luxuria quæ statum mentis evertunt,* it implies the height of their “ *luxury and intemperance.*” It is observed by some, that our prophet retains still the language of his education in the bluntness of his expressions,

sions, the great men that lived wholly at their ease, in wantonness and luxury, he stiles like the herdsmen of Tekoah, the kine of Bashan. That he thought was title good enough for such who seemed to have souls for no other end, than the other had. And hath not that *delicata insania*, as St. Austin calls it, that soft and effeminate kind of madness taken possession of too many among us, whose birth and education designed them for more manly employments? Yea, what an age of luxury do we live in, when instead of those noble characters of men from their virtue and wisdom, and courage, it is looked on among some as a mighty character of a person, that he eats and drinks well: a character that becomes none so much as the kine of Bashan in the literal sense, for surely they did so, or else they had never been in so great esteem among the herdsmen of Tekoah. A character which those philosophers would have been ashamed of, who looked upon no other end of human life but pleasure; but in order to that, they thought nothing more necessary than temperance and sobriety; but whatever esteem they had then, they have lost all their reputation among our modern Epicures, who know of no such things as pleasures of the mind, and would not much value whether they had any faculties of the mind or no, unless it were for the contrivance of new oaths and debaucheries. But if this were only among some few persons, we hope the whole nation would not suffer for their madness: for scarce any age hath been so happy, but it hath had some monsters in morality as well as nature. But I am afraid these vices are grown too epidemical; not only in the city, but the countries



too; what mean else those frequent complaints, and I hope more general than the causes of them, that the houses of great men in too many places are so near being public schools of debauchery, rather than of piety and virtue, where men shall not want instructors to teach them to forget both God and themselves? wherein sobriety is so far from being accounted a matter of honour, that the rules of the Persian civility are quite forgotten, and men are now forced to unman themselves. I know nothing would tend more to the honour of our nation, or the advantage of it, than if once these public excesses were severely restrained, I do not mean so much by making new laws, for those generally do but exercise peoples wits by finding out new evasions, but by executing old ones.

2. Covetousness and oppression. You see what these great men in Samaria did when they had any respite from their excesses and intemperance, then woe be to the poor who come in their way; *which oppresses the poor, and crush the needy*: ver. 1. either by the hands of violence, or by those arts and devices which either their honesty or poverty have kept them from the knowledge of. And if there be not so much of open violence in our days, the thanks are due to the care of our magistrates, and the severity of our laws, but it is hard to say whether ever any age produced more studious and skilful to pervert the design of laws, without breaking the letter of them, than this of ours hath done. Fraud and injustice are now managed with a great deal of artifice and cunning; and he thinks himself nobody in the understanding of the world, that cannot overreach his brother, and  
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not be discovered: or however in the multiplicity and obscurity of our laws cannot find out something in pretence at least to justify his actions by. But if appeal be made to the court of judicature, what arts are then used either for concealing or hiring witnesses, so that if their purses be not equal, the adverse party may over-swear him by so much as his purse is weightier than the others. I heartily wish it may never be said of us, what the orator once said of the Greeks, "*Quibus jusjurandum locus, testimonium ludus* \*; they made it a matter of jest and drollery to forswear themselves, and give false testimonies." But supposing men keep within the bounds of justice and common honesty, yet how unsatiable are the desires of men! they are for adding house to house, and land to land, never contented with what either their ancestors have left them, or the bountiful hand of heaven hath bestowed upon them; till at last it may be, in the prophet's expression, *for their covetousness, the stone cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber answer it* †; i. e. provoke God to give a severe check to the exorbitant and boundless desire of men, as he hath done by this day's calamity. Thus while the city thought with *Babylon, to sit as a lady for ever, while she dwelt carelessly, and said I am, and there is none else beside me; evil is come upon her, and she knows not from whence it comes, and mischief is fallen upon her, and she hath not been able to put it off, and desolation is come upon her suddenly, which she did not foresee* ‡.

3. Contempt of God and his laws. That we read of ver. 4. where the prophet speaks by

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\*Cicer. pro Flacco. † Hab. ii. 11. ‡ Isa. xlvii. 7, 8, 11.



an irony to them, *come to Bethel and transgress*, &c. he knew well enough they were resolved to do it, let God or the prophet say what they pleased. For these kine of Bashan were all for the calves of Dan and Bethel, and some think that is the reason of the title that is given them. These great men of Samaria thought it beneath them to own religion any farther than it was subservient to their civil interests. They were all of Jeroboam's religion, who looked on it as a mere politic thing, and fit to advance his own designs by. I am afraid there are too many at this day who are secretly of his mind, and think it a piece of wisdom to be so. Blessed God, that men should be so wise to deceive themselves, and go down with so much discretion to hell! These are the grave and retired Atheists, who, though they secretly love not religion, yet their caution hinders them from talking much against it. But there is a sort of men much more common than the other; the faculties of whose minds are so thin and airy, that they will not bear the consideration of any thing, much less of religion; these throw out their bitter scoffs, and profane jests against it. A thing never permitted that I know of in any civilized nation in the world; whatsoever their religion was, the reputation of religion was always preserved sacred. God himself (saith Josephus) would not suffer the Jews to speak evil of other Gods, though they were to destroy all those who tempted them to the worship of them. And shall we suffer the most excellent and reasonable religion in the world, *viz.* the Christian, to be prophaned by the unhallowed mouths of any who will venture to be damned, to be account-

ed witty? If their enquiries were deeper, their reason stronger, or their arguments more persuasive, than of those who have made it their utmost care and business to search into these things, they ought to be allowed a fair hearing; but for men who pretend to none of these things, yet still to make religion the object of their scoffs and raillery, doth not become the gravity of a nation professing wisdom to permit it, much less the sobriety of a people professing Christianity. In the mean time such persons may know, that wise men may be argued out of a religion they own, but none but fools and madmen will be drolled out of it. Let them first try whether they can laugh men out of their estates, before they attempt to do it out of their hopes of an eternal happiness. And I am sure it will be no comfort to them in another world, that they were accounted wits for deriding those miseries which they then feel and smart under the severity of: it will be no mitigation of their flames that they go laughing into them; nor will they endure them the better because they would not believe them. But while this is so prevailing a humour among the vain men of this age and nation, what can we expect but that God should by remarkable, and severe judgments seek to make men more serious in religion; or else make their hearts to ake, and their joints to tremble, as he did Belshazzar's, when he could find nothing else to carouse in but the vessels of the temple. And when men said in the Prophet Zephaniah, chap. i. 12. *that God neither did good nor evil* (presently it follows) \* *therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a de-*

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solation:

\* Zeph. i. 13, 14, 15.



*folation: the day of the Lord is near, a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation; as it is with us at this time. Thus we see how sad the parallel hath been not only in the judgments of Israel, but in the sins likewise which have made those judgments so severe.*

4. The severity of the judgment appears not only from the causes, but from the author of it. *I have overthrown some of you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.* God challenges the execution of his justice to himself, not only in the great day, but in his judgment here in the world. *Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it\*?* When God is pleased to punish men for their sins, the execution of his justice is agreeable to his nature now, as it will be at the end of the world. We all know that he may do it if he please, and he hath told us, that he doth and will do it; and we know withal, that without such remarkable severities, the world will hardly be kept in any awe of him. We do not find that love doth so much in the world as fear doth, there being so very few persons of tractable and ingenuous spirits. It is true of too many, what \* *Laëtantius* observes of the Romans, "*Nurquam Dei meminerunt, nisi dum in malis sunt,* they seldom think of God, " but when they are afraid of him." And there is not only this reason as to particular persons why God should punish them, but there is a greater as to communities, and bodies of men; for although God suffers wicked men to escape punishment here, as he often doth, yet he is sure not to do it in the life to come: but communities

\* *Amos* iii. 6. † *Laë.* l. 2. c. 11.

munities of men can never be punished but in this world; and therefore the justice of God doth often discover itself in these common calamities, to keep the world in subjection to him, and to let men see that neither the multitude of their associates, nor the depth of their designs, nor the subtilty of their councils, can secure them from the omnipotent arm of divine justice, when he hath determined to visit their transgressions with rods, and their iniquities with stripes. But when he doth all this, yet his *loving kindness doth he not utterly take from them*: for in the midst of all his judgments he is pleased to remember mercy; of which we have a remarkable instance in the text, for when God was overthrowing cities, yet *he plucked the inhabitants as fire-brands out of the burning*: and so I come from the severity of God,

2. To the mixture of his mercy in it. *And ye were as a fire-brand plucked out of the burning*. That notes two things, the nearness they were in to the danger, and the unexpectedness of their deliverance out of it.

1. The nearness they were in to the danger, *quasi torris, cujus jam magna pars absumpta est*, as some paraphrase it; *like a brand*, the greatest part of which is already consumed by fire; which shews the difficulty of their escaping. So Joshua is said to be *a brand plucked out of the fire*, Zech. iii. 2. And to this St. Hierom, upon this place, applies that difficult passage, 1 Cor. iii. 15. *they shall be saved, but so as by fire*, noting the greatness of the danger they were in, and how hardly they should escape. And are not all the inhabitants of this city, and all of us in the suburbs of the other, whose



houses escaped so near the flames, as *fire-brands plucked out of the burning*? When the fire came on in its rage and fury, as though it would in a short time have devoured all before it, that not only this whole city, but so great a part of the suburbs of the other should escape untouched, is, all circumstances considered, a wonderful expression of the kindness of God to us in the midst of so much severity. If he had suffered the fire to go on to have consumed the remainder of our churches and houses, and laid this city even with the other in one continued heap of ruins, we must have said, *Just art thou, O Lord, and righteous in all thy judgments*. We ought rather to have admired his patience in sparing us so long, than complain of this rigour of his justice in punishing us at last; but instead of that he hath given us occasion this day, with the *three children in the fiery furnace*, to praise him in the midst of the flames. For even the inhabitants of London themselves, who have suffered most in this calamity, have cause to acknowledge the mercy of God toward them, that they are escaped themselves; though it be (as the Jews report of Joshua the high priest, when thrown into the fire by the Chaldeans) with their cloaths burnt about them. Though their habitations be consumed, and their losses otherwise may be too great, yet that in the midst of so much danger by the flames, and the press of the people, so very few should suffer the loss of their lives, ought to be owned by them and us as a miraculous Providence of God toward them. And therefore *not unto us, not unto us, but to his holy name be the praise of so great a preservation* in the midst of so heavy a judgment.

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2. The unexpectedness of such a deliverance; they are not saved by their own skill and counsel, nor by their strength and industry, but by him who by his mighty hand did *pluck them as fire-brands out of the burning*. Though we own the justice of God in the calamities of this day, let us not forget his mercy in what he hath unexpectedly rescued from the fury of the flames; that the royal palaces of our gracious sovereign, the residence of the nobility, the houses of parliament, the courts of judicature, the place where we are now assembled, and several others of the same nature, with other places and habitations to receive those who were burnt out of their own, stand at this day untouched with the fire (and long may they continue so) ought chiefly to be ascribed to the power and goodness of that God, who not only commands the raging of the sea, and the madness of the people, but whom the winds and the flames obey. Although enough in a due subordination to Divine Providence can never be attributed to the mighty care and industry of our most gracious sovereign, and his royal highness; who by their presence and encouragement inspired a new life and vigour into the sinking spirits of the citizens, whereby God was pleased so far to succeed their endeavours, that a stop was put to the fury of the fire in such places where it was as likely to have prevailed, as in any parts of the city consumed by it.

O let us not then frustrate the design of so much severity mixed with so great mercy: let it never be said, that neither judgments nor kindness will work upon us: that neither our deliverance



deliverance from the pestilence which walks in darkness, nor from the flames which shine as the noon-day, will awaken us from that lethargy and security we are in by our sins: but let God take what course he pleases with us, we are the same incorrigible people still that ever we were. For we have cause enough for our mourning and lamentation this day, if God had not sent new calamities upon us, that we were no better for those we had undergone before. We have surfeited with mercies, and grown sick of the kindness of heaven to us, and when God hath made us smart for our fulness and wantonness, then we grew sullen and murmured and disputed against Providence, and were willing to do any thing but repent of our sins, and reform our lives. It is not many years since God blessed us with great and undeserved blessings, which we then thought ourselves very thankful for; but if we had been really so, we should never have provoked him who bestowed those favours upon us in so great a degree as we have done since. Was this our requital to him for restoring our sovereign, to rebel the more against heaven? Was this our thankfulness for removing the disorders of church and state, to bring them into our lives? Had we no other way of trying the continuance of God's goodness to us, but by exercising his patience by our greater provocations? as though we had resolved to let the world see, there could be a more unthankful and disobedient people than the Jews had been. Thus we sinned with as much security and confidence, as though we had blinded the eyes, or bribed the justice, or commanded the power of heaven. When God

of a sudden like one highly provoked drew forth the sword of his destroying angel, and by it cut off so many thousands in the midst of us; then we fell upon our knees, and begged the mercy of heaven, that our lives might be spared, that we might have time to amend them: but no sooner did our fears abate, but our devotion did so too; we had soon forgotten the promises we made in the day of our distress, and I am afraid it is at this day too true of us which is said in the Revelations of those who had escaped the several plagues which so many had been destroyed by. *And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the work of their hands\**. For if we had not greedily sucked in again the poison we had only laid down while we were begging for our lives, if we had not returned with as great fury and violence as ever to our former lusts, the removing of one judgment had not been as it were only to make way for the coming on of another. For the grave seemed to close up her mouth, and death by degrees to withdraw himself, that the fire might come upon the stage, to act its part too in the tragedy our sins have made among us: and I pray God this may be the last act of it. Let us not then provoke God to find out new methods of vengeance, and make experiments upon us of what other unheard of severities may do for our cure. But let us rather meet God now by our repentance, and returning to him, by our serious humiliation for our former sins, and our steadfast resolutions to return no more to the practice of them. That that much more dangerous infection of our souls may

\* Rev. ix. 20.



may be cured as well as that of our bodies, that the impure flames which burn within may be extinguished, that all our luxuries may be retrenched, our debaucheries punished, our vanities taken away, our careless indifferency in religion turned into a greater seriousness both in the profession and the practice of it. So will God make us a happy and prosperous, when he finds us a more righteous and holy nation. So will God succeed all your endeavours for the honour and interest of that people whom you represent. So may he add that other title to the rest of those you have deserved for your country's good, to make you *repairers of the breaches of the city* as well as of the nation, and *restorers of paths to dwell in*. So may that city, which now sits solitary like a widow, have her tears wiped off, and her beauty and comeliness restored unto her. Yea, so may her present ruins, in which she now lies buried, be only the forerunners of a more joyful resurrection. In which, though the body may remain the same, the qualities may be so altered, that its present desolation may be only the putting off its former inconveniences, weakness, and deformities, that it may rise with greater glory, strength and proportion: and to all her other qualities, may that of incorruption be added too, at least till the general conflagration. And I know your great wisdom and justice will take care, that those who have suffered by the ruins, may not likewise suffer by the rising of it, that the glory of the city may not be laid upon the tears of the orphans and widows, but that its foundations may be settled upon justice and piety. That there be no complaining in the streets for want of  
righteousness,

righteousness, nor in the city for want of churches, nor in the churches for want of a settled maintenance. That those who attend upon the service of God in them may never be tempted to betray their consciences to gain a livelihood, nor to comply with the factious humours of men, that they may be able to live among them. And thus when the city through the blessing of heaven shall be built again, may it be a habitation of holiness toward God, of loyalty toward our gracious king and his successors, of justice and righteousness toward men, of sobriety, and peace, and unity among all the inhabitants, till not cities and countries only, but the world and time itself shall be no more. Which God of his infinite mercy grant through the merits and mediation of his Son, to whom, with the Father and the Eternal Spirit, be all honour and glory for evermore.



## On St. Matthew's Day.

September 21st.

By Dr. ADAM LITTLETON.

MATTHEW, Chap. ix. Ver. 9.

*And as Jesus passed from thence, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, follow me. And he arose, and followed him.*

**I**N these words we may observe on the one hand some actions of our Blessed Lord, on the other some characters of the person he makes choice of for that high office.

Our Lord we may take notice of in these three instances.

I. The passage; *And as Jesus passed forth from thence.*

II. The view; *He saw a man.*

III. The call; *And he saith unto him, follow me.*

The publican is set forth to us,

1. By his name: *A man called Matthew.*

2. By his employ: *Sitting at the receipt of custom.*

3. By his ready obedience: *And he arose, and followed him.*

These will be the heads of our ensuing meditations, of which as briefly as I may, that I may say somewhat of them all.

I. First,

I. First, then, the passage: *As Jesus passed forth from thence*, which will take in two considerable circumstances of time and place, when and where this was done. *As he passed*. When was that? *from thence*. Where was it?

The place had been the scene of many of his miracles; Capernaum, whither he went to dwell, when he left Nazareth, as we read in the fourth chapter, therefore called in the first verse of this chapter, *ἰδία πόλις his own city*. Blessed city! hadst thou but known thy advantages; hadst thou, as neither thou nor thy mother-city Jerusalem did \*, understood in that thy day, as thou mightest and shouldst have done. Thy Saviour born at Bethlehem, and bred at Nazareth, now owns thee for his city: for though he travelled much up and down all Galilee, yet in thee it was that he fixed his abode; and his house among the rest, how mean soever it might be, made one glorious part of thy dwellings; as we find a little above the text, ver. 7. Happy people to have Christ's presence in his word and ordinances, in his doctrine and miracles among you; but much more unhappy, that you neglected such gracious opportunities! O may it never be our case, as we are so favoured, so to be in like manner negligent, as ye were!

This being a sea-town, situate upon the lake of Galilee, gave our Saviour the advantage of passing to and fro, in his disciples fisher-boats, with ease to all the neighbouring towns and countries, that bordered on Genesareth.

This also was the reason, why Matthew as a publican was settled here in his employ, to take the customs of the sea, and the tributes of passengers :

\* Luke xix. 42.



passengers: whom, as his office in the Hebrew language, intituled, בעל עברה *the master* or overseer of the passage; so never did he meet with a better passenger than now, who passed him from his earthly cares, and worldly gains, to spiritual employments, and heavenly rewards.

Happy publican, to have thy office fixed here in such a conjuncture! Thy Jesus, though he pass along, will not pass thee by, nor will he pass toll-free, but bestow that on thee, which shall be infinitely better worth to thee, than all thy trade, and those meaner acknowledgements, that others by force and with ill-will were wont to pay thee.

Consider what it is, of what hopes and values, to be in Christ's way, to have to do where he is used to pass, who uses to do good wherever he goes.

It was but just now, as appears by the foregoing part of the chapter, that Christ had wrought a miraculous cure upon a poor paralytic; and that, as his manner was, and as became him, who was physician of soul and body both, with the pardon of his sins to boot. Which, though it stumbled some, yet the cure sufficiently justified, and filled the multitude with just and surprizing admirations.

Our Saviour leaving the throng, retires to his home; and after some small repose, loving to divide his time betwixt the satisfactions of a pious privacy, and the duties of a charitable converse, comes forth again to seek new occasions of doing good; he comes forth at the seagate, and takes a walk upon the key, where passengers and other company, either for business or diversion, were wont to be, and there finds

finds what he looks for, another object of as much pity as the man sick of the palsy was, a publican.

Gracious Lord, how diligent art thou in doing good! how negligent are we in receiving it! who art fain to look us out, and makest that many times, which seems mere chance, to be a blessed occasion to us, of spiritual improvement, and of eternal assurance; and turnest accidents into special instances of love and intimacy; if we do but as we should do, regard thy goings, observe thy looks, and obey thy calls. For as thou passedst from thence, in thy passage thou cast an eye of mercy upon him, who is now a slave of the world, but designed by thee to be an eminent servant of thine. *As Jesus passed along, he saw a man named Matthew.* That is our second.

II. The view. *He saw him*, εἶδεν, looking about he spied him, or as he went along (so we use to do) unexpectedly, and without design he cast his eyes on him: but there was more in it than so. This sight of thy Saviour's, publican, might be casual indeed to thee; thou mightest not be aware of it, nor at all think what eye thou liest under, till the gracious glance startled thee, and struck thee into a sacred fit of astonishment, and a due preparation for the command that was to follow, of following him; who first bespeaks thee with his look, and then makes use of the authority of his voice, to make good his conquest over thy world-engaged mind; but sure to thy Saviour himself it was no chance, that has thus brought thee into his sight. He was well aware, and resolved aforehand what to do; he knew thy heart, and



his eye-lids are now opened to try thee, and to search thee out.

Wherefore St. Luke has chose a word of a more exquisite importance, *ἑώρατο*, *he beheld him*; as a thing to be seen with judgment, and as a thing worth the seeing with affection: he looked him through, and judged him fit, at least resolved to make him so, and, as so, loved him: he saw him, as God saw things which he made at the creation, that they were good, because he made them so\*.

I cannot think by the manner of expression, that Christ had any personal knowledge of this publican before this interview; for so it ought to be read, according to the order of the words in the Greek, *He saw a man sitting at the custom, whose name was Matthew*; which seems to disown any former acquaintance betwixt them. And indeed there needed not; for Christ, who saw Nathanael under the fig-tree † before he came in person to him, and who at sight knew what was in men, and needed not that any, not the men themselves should tell him ‡; could and did without any gradual trials infallibly pass judgment.

I will not deny, but the fame of Christ's person and miracles might tempt any one's curiosity, if there were no more, especially that were an inhabitant of Capernaum, where he now dwelt, to come and see him at least; nor will I say, but Matthew might probably enough be one of the many publicans, who might sometimes pay him a looser, and somewhat an unconcerned attendance, in respect of what his constant followers did. But that Christ had hitherto

\* Gen. i. 31. † John i. 48. ‡ John ii. 25.

thereto taken any particular distinct notice of him, there is nothing in the story can to my understanding make out: and if granted, it would somewhat derogate from that omniscience I now mentioned, whereby he could immediately judge of mens inclinations; and indeed from his method of election of his disciples, as we find in other instances of the like nature; where, upon the very first address, so far as Gospel story hath informed us, he useth this form of words, *Follow me.*

But be that as it will, and as the hearer pleases, whether Christ saw him ever before or no; here lies the signal favour of this sight, that he singles him out now alone, and in a distinguishing kindness makes him the mark to shoot the lovely and love-creating glances of his heavenly eyes at. *Oculi sunt in amore duces.* This look begat love, and was the forerunner and evidence of an affection to follow.

The Son of God, upon the assumption of human nature, had his soul touched with all our passions, yet so as to be sinless and innocent emotions of his diviner mind; and, as we cannot but do, unless we be very well versed in the art of dissimulation, he also made discoveries of them in his very looks and eyes. These are the windows of the heart, through which it sees, and is itself seen, and shews all its pleasures and discontents to others: hence mutual sight proves such entertainment to friends, and breeds no less regret to foes.

Our Blessed Lord, who was all made of compassion and love, being freed from all those rugged, boisterous distempers, which we, whilst we seek to trouble others with, labour under



ourselves, feeling the worst effects of our heats and animosities within our own breasts; he, I say, had all the lines of goodness drawn in his heavenly face, and above all his eyes sparkling with seraphic love, and darting forth rays of it, to warm and fire the hearts of all that either beheld him, or he beheld.

Fortunate man, whom he, who is now for ever to be thy Lord, hath cast and fixed his gracious eye upon, to mark thee for his friendship, and the choicest dignations of his love!

Thy looks, Blessed Saviour, when justly angry, have kindly operations, and work blest effects. Thou, when thy Apostle Peter had shamefully denied thee, to a double breach both of that fealty he owed thee as his Lord, and of that promise he himself had lately with a voluntary and a reiterated confidence made, thoughtest it enough to chastise him with thy eye, and didst in one look at once wound and heal his heart.

O look upon me, as thou didst upon that Apostle, that I may weep for my misdemeanors and frequent denials of thee! O look upon me as thou didst upon this publican, that being guided by thy eye, I may follow thee, as he did! which brings us to the person, whom our Saviour by this sight designed for his choice and service. *He saw a man named Matthew.* That is the third.

III. The person's name, Matthew: who by the other two Evangelists, St. Mark and St. Luke, as it was usual enough for the same man to have several names, is called Levi, the son of Alphaeus.

Some

Some would have these to be two different persons, as well as names. Heracleon, as he is quoted by Clemens Alexandrinus, reckoning up some, who were denied the opportunity of giving testimony to Christ among the heathens, names these four, Matthew, Philip, Thomas and Levi; and Origen makes Matthew to be an Apostle, but Levi to be only a disciple in common, and not an Apostle. Hereupon, together with some other offers of reason from the sacred text itself, Grotius makes it his guess, that Levi and Matthew might both be chosen at one and the same time, as both belonging to the custom-house; and that Levi, at whose house the feast was, and who was attended by the rest of the publicans, might be the chief in that office, as Zaccheus was at Jericho, who is called ἀρχιτελώνης\*, the chief of the publicans, the surintendant of the finances, or comptroller of the customs; and that Matthew might be an under-officer employed by him.

I shall crave leave, if I dissent from that great expositor's conjecture, and rather embrace the common opinion, which is so fairly confirmed by all the circumstances of the story; for laying aside only the diversity of the name, the three Evangelists do exactly agree. What he quoteth as before reported, is little better than a single witness against a full concurrent evidence. As to those little reasons that are brought in beside, they do but make a show, and are easily answered: since that St. Matthew says only in general terms, that Jesus sat at meat in the house †, not naming whose house; whereas they plainly say, it was Levi's house; and that

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he

\* Luke xix. 1.

† Ver. 10.



he does not any where call himself Levi, is to be imputed to his modesty, which was the reason also he doth not say it was his own house, and made him content with the title of his former profession, *Matthew the publican*\*, even there, where he sets down the list of the twelve Apostles, wherein also, out of the same modesty, he puts Thomas before himself, whom the others place after him. And therefore it is likely enough, they call him Levi also in this passage, not Matthew, which was his more noted name, on purpose to disguise his former employ, as St. Hierom observes; as being willing to treat a penitent brother with all tenderness, and not upbraid him with the errors or miscarriages of his past life; and that according to a known rule among the Jews themselves, that we ought not to say to such an one, זכור חטאיו *Remember thy former works*.

The name, which is Syriac, signifies the same, say some, as in Greek *Theodorus*, or, as others, in Latin *Donatus*; nor are there wanting, who interpret it broker, or toll-gatherer; as if his very office had given it him. This is not material, nor deserves it any further enquiry.

His own free dealing with himself, and his brother Evangelists tender treating of him, is worth our remark; that it is a good sign of true penitence, when we spare not ourselves in the mention and acknowledgement of our own former faults; and it is a necessary piece of Christian charity, to be favourable in speaking of others, and not to say the worst, but rather to praise God's grace for what they are after conversion,

\* Matt. x. 3.

version, than to reproach human infirmity, for what they were before.

There is one thing more may be observed, that if Matthew were Levi, and was the son of Alpheus, as it is said by the other two, he was kin to our Saviour on the mother's side\*, who is said to have been the sister or kinswoman of the Blessed Virgin. But as Christ did not govern himself in his choice by carnal affection; for he has preferred several others before those two James and Jude, who are called *the Lord's brethren*†; so neither doth this Apostle pride himself in that carnal relation; but with an humble remembrance of his sinful estate, styles himself the publican still, as Jude also, with the same humility, intitles himself the servant of Jesus, though he be by others termed his brother, that is, his near kinsman. And thus we have done with the name of the person; we are now to speak of his employment; the fourth head.

IV. *He was sitting at the receipt of custom.* He was a receiver of customs, or tributes; a gatherer of tenths, says the Arabic; and was now attending upon the duty. I confess, a scandalous employment, that heard ill throughout all the conquered provinces in the Roman dominion; and the men that managed it, looked on as thieves and cheats for their exactions and ill usage generally of the people, even to the infamy of a proverb, πάντες τελῶναι πάντες εἰσιν ἄρπαγες, men of no better reputation than promoters, informers, and catchpoles.

And beside the public grievance, the Jews had peculiar prejudice against the office, as the

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badge

\* John xix. 25. † 1 Cor. ix. 5.



badge of their servitude, and the upbraid of their lost liberty, and the complement of all their other miseries; especially if those of their own country undertook it, as it mostly fell out to be, the natives being taken in to this affair to choose, as best understanding the customs of their people. In this case they resented it highly, and laid load of censure upon the men, however blameless they might be in the execution of it, as perfidious apostates to religion, and barbarous oppressors of their brethren. And they justified all the scandal they could cast on them, from this; that they did, as the necessity of the employ many times forced them to do, converse with heathens. For which reason they accounted them in the same rank, as appears by that form of our Saviour's taken from the Jews, *Let him be unto thee as an beaten and a publican* \*; and they yoked them with the most notorious infamous wretches, such were they whom they called sinners †; as if they had been termed publicans, not from their public office, of farming the public customs, but for their public ill lives, and the public censure that was upon them.

Further, they held it was not lawful to shew them any common civility, to eat or drink, or so much as to walk or talk, or have any thing to do with them, more than needs must. Their evidence would not be admitted in any court. Money received from them was not to be laid out in purchase, nor put to the rest of the estate. They made no conscience to cheat and couzen them, when they could get them at that advantage, even with a lye, and that bound with

\* Matt. xviii. 17.

† Matt. ix. 11.

with an oath. In a word, they shunned them as pests, and avoided coming near them, as if the very air had been infected with their breath.

And now, poor publican, after this black character, after these foul aspersions, what shall we say to thee? what can we say for thee? whom the love of gain has so far prevailed with, as to disoblige thy countrymen, to scandal thy religion, and to bring discredit to any other, that shall receive thee. Is Christianity then become the shelter of the greatest crimes? and hast thou, holy Jesus, set open an asylum, a sanctuary for the entertainment of such profligates as these, publicans and sinners, whom no other religion will vouchsafe to own?

O sinner, whoever, whatever thou art, acknowledge the goodness of thy Redeemer, whose design it was to save that which is lost, and who came to call sinners to repentance\*. Despair not of finding that mercy for thy penitent soul, which thy gracious master has afforded to others in thy condition; and seeing thou seest here a publican advanced to the apostolical chair, and placed in the supreme dignity of the church; assure thyself, that, if thou canst repent thee truly of thy sins, how many or how great soever they may be, thou shalt find some corner in the church, nor shalt thou be denied a room in the fellowship of saints.

And yet after all this cry and calumny, the publicans at the worst were more hopeful than many of their proud censurers, and did by repentance get to heaven before the pretending Pharisees, who thought themselves so righteous that they needed it not.

Nor

\* Matt. ix. 13.



Nor indeed was the employ itself, though ill-managed oft-times, so criminal as they make it.

It is true, it is very hard, I will not say impossible, for a man to behave himself well, and avoid all blame in some trades and professions; I mean such as are made the instruments of vanity, or such as cannot thrive and be maintained, but by the sins or ruins of other people. And of this last kind is the publican's business, which had such an appearance of dishonesty, that it drew a disparagement upon every one that had any thing to do in it.

Notwithstanding this, there have been examples to the contrary. Roman story tells us of one, no less a man than the emperor Vespasian's father, who had a statue erected for him with this inscription, Καλῶς τελωνήσονται, *To the honest publican.* Nor need we go so far: we have one in the New Testament, who, for ought appears, was as just as his name\* bespeaks him, Zaccheus: and it may be made out by that account he gives of his estate, that it was honestly got. For says he, *One half of my goods I give to the poor*†; there is his charity settled; and then he makes a challenge, *If he had done any one any wrong, he would, out of the remaining moiety, make fourfold restitution,* which was thieves law; there is his justice: so that, dividing this half into four parts, there could be but one fourth part, that is, one eighth of the whole estate, that could fall under suspicion; and if so, we must suppose too, what is not to be supposed, that by this means what with his charity, what with his justice, he would leave himself quite nothing. For one half was actually

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\* יוֹסֵף Justus.

† Luke xix. 8.

ally disposed of, and if one fourth part of the other half had been faulty, the other three must have gone with it, to make good the restitution.

And that our St. Matthew was one of these honest publicans, I find no reason to distrust; for his *sitting at the receipt* is not an argument so much, as some would make it, of his fraud or covetousness, as of his fidelity and care in the discharge of his place.

It is no idle observation, that Christ found his disciples at the work of their callings, when he thought fit to call them; as some mending their nets, Matthew here at his employ, which though in common esteem bad enough, yet we have shewn might honestly be followed: and *ἐργον οὐδ' ἐν ὀνειδῶς*, *no work shames a man*, that well performs it. The devil takes advantage of mens idleness, who, when they have nothing to do, are easily tempted to do ill\*; and he possesses himself of the empty soul, let it be never so well garnished.

Lord, do thou so govern me by thy providence and grace, that when thou comest to cast an eye upon me, and to overlook me, I may be found, if not so doing, if not actually employed in works of piety, yet I may be found doing that which is lawful and right.

Aulus Gellius, no despicable author, tells us a story, though others give another account, of one Protagoras, who being poor was forced for a livelihood to carry burthens. One day he had got some chumps on his back, which he was bringing to town for fuel. Democritus, a famed philosopher, meets him; admiring his contrivance,

\* Matt. xii. 44.



contrivance, how he had got that rude parcel of stuff together in such order; for his farther satisfaction bids him lay down his bundle, unty it, and do it up again. He does so, and with that method and artifice, that the philosopher perceiving by this essay, he had a logical head, and an ingenuity fit for science, told him, "come, young man, you must along with me; you are fit for greater and better things than this you are about." He takes him along with him, maintains him, breeds him up in philosophy, wherein he proved subtle, and in some degree eminent.

It was the same case with Matthew here, if I may make comparison. He was puzzling and pelting himself in a sorry employment. Our Saviour comes by, and finds him sitting at it; he fetches him off with a gracious call, as if he had said, *come, leave this sordid and scandalous employ; I have greater and nobler service for thee. And he saith unto him, Follow me.* This the fifth particular.

V. His call; in a word of command, *Follow me*: a word very well befitting the captain of our salvation, when he was to list soldiers or officers in his militia. It was his usual form upon these occasions: and sometimes with a shrewd addition of taking up the cross, and following him; especially where he went upon trial. And indeed the cross is supposed as a condition to Christianity; every private person that gives up his name here, must expect that; much more Apostles, and those who are designed to high places of service, are obliged to follow their Master in his humility and sufferings.

When

When this word was spoken, how did it rouse and warm the publican's heart ! how did it enlighten his mind, and inflame his zeal !

The greatest things have been always done with the fewest words ; it was so at first, when God did as it were speak things, and his word was productive, and he called things that were not to be what they are \*.

What efficacy this word had, what change it wrought on Matthew's mind, how it run through every vein of his heart, and filled his soul with new senses, and strange transports, we shall shew anon.

We read of one Polemo, a debauched young man, who in one of his wild humours, disguised in drink and habit both, lit into a philosopher's school, where he was discoursing of temperance, and other moralities, and did so convincingly apply himself to this chance customer, that in a little time my gallant began to be ashamed, and out of countenance, slipped off the chaplet of flowers off his head, and let it fall on the ground ; tore off his knots of ribbands, and other fineries ; composed himself, and at last grew to that sober understanding, that after that time he wholly bent himself to the study of philosophy, and proved so good a proficient, that, after the death of that master, he succeeded in the school.

St. Matthew, without doubt, had his head and his heart full of worldly cares, of which at this word's speaking, as it had been a sacred charm, he was wholly dispossessed.

Such was the majesty of our Saviour's person, such the brightness of his countenance, the  
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\* 1 Cor. i. 28.



attractiveness of his looks, and the authority of his word, that there needed no other logic to convince, no other rhetoric to persuade his followers.

And yet this very word, which we may justly wonder at, though spoken by Christ with the same earnestness, hath not always had the same effect. Some have not come at the call; others, though they have come, have not followed him, as they should do: and that, to shew on one hand, that there is something on our part, when we are called, to be done by us, there must be a concurrence, an obedient compliance of our will; else we may resist the Word as well as the Spirit \*; and on the other hand, to shew that external profession will not secure men from secret impiety, nor excuse them for it.

The rich young man was hopeful, so far as the Commandments went. Christ looked on him, and loved him; but when this word of command came †, he shrunk back, and went his way sad, for he had great possessions; houses and lands, and bags of money stood in his way to heaven, and he had learnt to observe and keep them as much as all the Commandments.

Judas was a disciple of Christ, and yet no true follower; he was called to be an Apostle, and in that sense chosen, but not elect. O how much better is it to be called to faintship, than to the highest office! This sets one aloft in the church visible, but that gives one a share in the invisible. One may be an Apostle, and yet a reprobate; so was Judas: while the saint has an assurance of God's favour here, and an earnest of his hopes hereafter.

And

\* Acts vii. 51.

† Mark x. 22.

And yet Judas too, no question, was as successfull in his ministry as the rest; since, as our church has rightly stated it, the virtue and efficacy of Christ's ordinances and church offices, doth not depend upon the sanctity or worthiness of the persons that administer them. It is with the church as it was with the ark; many that helped to build her, and were good workmen too, perished themselves in the deluge.

O Lord Jesus! may thy call be so effectual to me, to every soul, that when thou sayest, *Seek ye my face*\*, our heart may answer, *Thy face, Lord, will we seek*; and with thy Apostle Matthew, when thou bidst us follow thee†, we may, as he did, leave all, all our worldly profits, all our carnal pleasures, and follow thee, whithersoever thou goest thyself, whithersoever thou shalt think fit to send us. That is the last.

VI. His ready obedience. *And he arose and followed him.* His rising up shews reverence and respect, as well as resolution. He now for ever hence-forward owns Christ for his master, and resolves to quit all, that he may be free to embark in his service.

He was wealthy and wise; he is now to forego a gainful employ; he sees nothing before him, whither he is going, but poverty and persecution; and yet is very well pleased with his change. He knows his new master is not worth a didrachmon, not two groats to pay his tribute with‡; but he knows that miracle and divinity can supply that, and every thing else; and had rather be a minister to a poor Christian, than an officer under the greatest Cæsar. He is now to gain other souls by preaching, instead

\* Psal. xxvii. 8. † Luke v. 28. ‡ Matt. xvii. 27.



stead of hazarding the loss of his own by trading. The other was a paltry business, limited to a little meer or lake: he is now made one of the receivers general for heaven; and all places, all persons are to be tributary. Balancing one thing with another, the troubles of the world with the duties of religion, he overlooks all disadvantages, and prefers *πραγματεῖαν πνευματικὴν*, as St. Chrysostom calls it, this spiritual traffic, before uncertain riches, and vexatious customs.

These thoughts make him not stand to parley; he accepts the condition at first word, and for a bargain of this advantage, thinks there need not two. He is *dicto audiens* \*, obedient to the heavenly call, as St. Paul says he was, and has nothing to reply, nothing more to ask.

One might have thought, that in a business of such consequence, there might have been allowed a little time to consider, and that the publican might have expostulated, as the young man in the comedy does, whom his father meeting in the street, bids him, without once acquainting him beforehand, by him home, and get him ready, he must be married to-day: *Tantumne rem tam negligenter?* To do a thing of such moment in so slight a manner? what! *As he passes by?* at first sight? at one word speaking? why? can Christ desire, can he expect a present obedience?

There was none of all this. St. Luke says, *he left all*, and went along with him immediately: all his gains he had already got, all his hopes of getting more.

What some say of his leaving his accompt unstated and uncleared, is not at all likely; since  
he

\* Acts xxvi. 19.

he was to continue, notwithstanding this change, hard by; and might have some other opportunity to take out his full and final discharge. Indeed Julian and Porphyry take that advantage of this opinion, that they charge him with falsehood, that he had cheated the state, and sheltered himself under the Christian profession: or, at least, if he could prove himself an honest man, they say he was a fool, to barter his trade for religion. But no worldly thoughts in himself, no surmises or censures of others could prevail with him to alter his mind, or keep him from engaging in this better service.

Being called, he follows without scruple or delay, and accepts the command with a speedy and chearful obedience. For knowing, that God loves *a chearful giver* \*, though he forsook all, he kept a reserve, to testify his chearfulness and joy in the entertainment of his master, which he made splendid, and becoming the occasion, having enough left for his consecration-dinner.

Nor was his obedience less constant than speedy. For he held out following his master to the end, till his master's departure, and till his own death. While Christ was on earth, he attended and accompanied him in all his travels, in all his necessities and dangers. After his ascension, he stayed in Jewry for some time, and there preached the Gospel to his countrymen, which at the request of some convert-Jews, or by the command of the rest of the Apostles, he committed to writing in the Hebrew language, as all the ancients agree; and St. Jerom affirms for himself, that he had seen and transcribed a copy of it. St. Bartho-

VOL. II. S lomew

\* 2 Cor. ix. 7.



Iomew took it with him into India, from whence it was brought back again by Pantenus into Greece, as Eusebius makes the report. This at last being lost, the translation, which, as Theophylact tells us, was performed by St. John, or as Athanasius says, by James the Less, was accepted of in its stead, and received into the Canon.

Having continued eight years among the Jews at home, he then takes a journey into Parthia, and thence into Æthiopia near the Indies, where he endeavoured to propagate the Gospel: so says Cassian of him, *Æthiopiam nigram doctrina fidei fecit candidam*. But alas! his labour there proved but washing the Blackamoor. For at last, which was the success of most of the Apostles in their several provinces, and one way of their following their master, he is called forth to seal the doctrine he had preached with his blood, and by the command of one Hyrtacus, a king of that country, is beheaded, as tradition goes, with a halberd, meekly kneeling on his knees. Thus to the dignity of his Apostleship, and the other merit of his being an Evangelist, was superadded a third advantage, the crown of martyrdom.

I cannot leave this, without a brief application of the whole. I am truly persuaded out of that charity I have to mankind, and am very well assured from my own manifold experience of God's goodness to my unworthy self; that there is no man, be his heart ever so wicked, be his life ever so corrupt, but has at times some good thoughts come upon him. It is the character the Psalmist gives of a desperate fool, that *God is not in all his thoughts* \*.

No.

\* Psal. x. 4.

No. God has created us by his power, and designed us by his wisdom, and preserves us by his mercy, for greater and nobler ends than to serve the wicked world, and sinful flesh; nor is he wanting by his grace to afford every one sufficient means for his spiritual conduct. He passeth by us often, when we are not aware of him; he looks upon us, and we see him not; and he calls us by checks of our own conscience, by motions of his Holy Spirit, and by the preachings of his word; but we stop our ears against him, and will not hear; and when he cries to us, *follow me*, we sit still, and mind him not.

O let us open our eyes to behold him, our ears to hear him, and our hearts to receive him.

Let us know that he is ever near us, about our bed, and about our work, at our up-rising, and our down-lying, and understands all our ways and our thoughts too.

Let us convince ourselves, that where ever we are, we are under his all-seeing eye; and when at any time we feel our hearts warmed with any good thoughts of him, let us be assured they are summons from him, to take us off from our sins, and to engage us in his service.

O let us take strict notice of his goings toward us, let us awfully regard his looks, and with a ready obedience follow him at his call, in imitation of this blessed publican; who is now in a multiplied capacity of glory, and an eminent degree of honour, together with his brother Apostles and Evangelists attending upon him that *sits on the throne*, and upon the Lamb.

*To whom be praise and thanksgiving, might, majesty and dominion, now and for ever. Amen.*



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On St. Michael and All Ang ;  
or Michaelmas Day.

September 29th.

By Dr. TILLOTSON, Archbishop of Canterbury.

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HEBREWS, Chap. i. Ver. 14.

*Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to  
minister for them who shall be heirs of salva-  
tion ?*

THIS is spoken of good angels, whose existence, as well as that of evil spirits, the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, do every where take for granted, no less than they do the being of God, and the immortality of the soul: and well they may, since they are all founded upon the general consent of all ages, derived down to us from the first spring and original of mankind; of which general consent and tradition, it is one of the hardest things in the world to assign any good reason, if the things themselves were not true. Therefore I shall not go about to force my way into this argument concerning the existence of spirits, and beings distinct from matter, by dint of dispute (which perhaps would neither be so proper, nor so profitable but shall take the thing as I find it received by a general consent of mankind. And so the books of Divine Revelation do: nor was there reason  
to

to proceed in any other method, than to suppose these things, and take them for granted, as generally assented to by mankind, without either asserting them for new discoveries, or attempting to prove what was so universally believed. The Scriptures indeed have more particularly declared the nature of these spirits, as also their order and employment; as in the words which I have read to you, where the office and employment of good angels is more particularly discovered: *Are they not all* (says the text) *ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

The author of this epistle to the Hebrews having had occasion, in comparing the two dispensations of the Law and the Gospel, to speak of the angels, by whose ministry the law was given, did not think fit to entertain those to whom he wrote, with any nice and curious speculations (for school divinity was not then in fashion) about the nature and order of angels; but tells us, what it concerns us more to know, namely, what their office and employment is in regard to us. Concerning their nature, he only tells us, that they are spirits; as to their office and employment, he says in general, that they are ministering spirits, that is, that they stand before God to attend upon him, ready to receive his commands, and to execute his pleasure: more particularly, that they are upon occasion appointed and sent forth by God to minister on the behalf, and to do good offices *for them that shall be heirs of salvation*. Which last words are a description of pious and good men, such as had sincerely embraced the Christian religion, and were thereby become the children of God, and heirs



of eternal salvation. So that these words are a brief summary of the doctrine of good angels, and of what the Scripture has thought fit to reveal to us concerning them: which may be referred to these three heads.

First, their nature; *are they not spirits?*

Secondly, their general office and employment; *are they not ministering spirits?*

Thirdly, their special office and employment, in regard to good men; *they are sent forth to minister for them* (that is, in their behalf, and for their benefit) *who shall be heirs of salvation.*

And this is as much as is necessary for us to know concerning them; and all this is very agreeable to the general apprehension of mankind; but the Scripture hath very much cleared and confirmed to us, that which was more obscure and less certain before. I shall briefly explain and illustrate these three heads, and then draw some useful inferences from the whole.

First, for their nature; they are spirits. This is universally agreed by all that acknowledge such an order of beings, that they are spirits: but whether they are pure spirits, divested of matter, and all kind of corporeal vehicle (as the philosophers term it) hath been a great controversy, but I think of no great moment and consequence. Not only the ancient philosophers, but some of the ancient Christian fathers, did believe angels to be cloathed with some kind of bodies, consisting of the purest and finest matter; which they call ætherial. And this opinion seems to be grounded upon a pious belief, that it is the peculiar excellency and prerogative of the divine nature, to be a pure and simple spirit, wholly separate from matter: but the  
more

more current opinion of the Christian church (especially of latter times) hath been, that angels are mere and pure spirits, without any thing that is material and corporeal belonging to them; but yet so, that they have power to assume thin and airy bodies, and can when they please appear in human shape, as they are frequently in Scripture said to have done. And this seems most agreeable to the Scripture account of them; though I think it is no necessary article of faith, either to believe that they are cloathed with some kind of bodies, or that they are wholly divested of matter.

But however this be, they are described in Scripture to be endowed with great excellencies and perfections; they are said to *excell in strength*, Psal. ciii. 20. and in knowledge and wisdom. Hence are those expressions of *being as an angel of God, to discern good and bad*, 2 Sam. xiv. 17. *Wise, according to the wisdom of an angel*, ver. 20. To be of great activity and swiftness in their motions; hence it is that they are represented in Scripture, as *full of wings*: and to excell in purity and holiness; hence is that title given them in Scripture, of *the holy angels*. This is the sum of what the Scripture hath in several places delivered to us, concerning the nature and properties of good angels; and beyond this, all our knowledge of them is mere conjecture and uncertainty; and the nice speculations concerning them, idle and wanton curiosities. Indeed the Scripture gives sufficient intimation of several ranks and orders among them, by calling Michael an archangel, and chief prince, and by distinguishing them by the names of *principalities and powers, and*  
S 4 *thrones,*



*thrones, and dominions* : but what the difference of these names import, though some have attempted to explain, yet I do not find that they have discovered any thing to us, beside their own ignorance and arrogance, in pretending to be *wise above what is written* ; *intruding into those things which they have not seen*, being vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds ; as the Apostle censure some in his time.

Secondly, we have here their general office and employment ; *they are ministering spirits* ; they are, as I may say, domestic servants, and constant attendants upon that great and glorious King, *whose throne is in the heavens, and whose kingdom ruleth over all* ; *they stand continually before him, to behold his face*, expecting his commands, and in a constant readiness to do his will. For though the omnipotence of God, and his perfect power of acting be such, that he can do all things immediately by himself, *whatever he pleaseth in heaven and in earth* ; can govern the world, and steer the affairs of it, and turn them which way he thinks best, by the least nod and beck of his will, without any instruments or ministers of his pleasure ; yet his wisdom and goodness has thought fit to honour his creatures, especially this higher and more perfect rank of beings, with his commands, and to make them, according to their several degrees and capacities, the ordinary ministers of his affairs, in the rule and government of this inferior world ; and this not for his own ease, for to infinite power nothing can be difficult or troublesome, but for their happiness ; and he therefore employs them in his work and service, that they may be capable of his favour and rewards.

And

And that the angels of God are the great ministers of his providence here in the world, hath not only been the constant tradition of all ages; but is very frequently and plainly asserted in Scripture. In the Old Testament we often read that God employed his angels to be the messengers of his will and pleasure to men: and to carry good tidings and comfortable news to them upon several occasions: as to Abraham, to foretel the miraculous birth of his son Isaac; and afterward to rescue him from being sacrificed: to Jacob, when he was so afraid of his brother Esau: to Manoah and his wife, to foretel the birth of Sampson, the great deliverer of Israel from the Philistines; and upon that great occasion of bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt, and conducting them through the wilderness, he sent a great and mighty angel, called *the angel of his presence*, to go before them, and guide them in their way: and the Apostle tells us, that *the law was delivered to them upon Mount Sinai by the disposition of angels*.

On the other hand, God frequently made them the messengers of his wrath, and instruments of his vengeance. Thus he sent them to foretel, and to execute that terrible destruction upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And he sent a destroying angel to brandish his sword in a visible manner over Jerusalem, and to smite them with the pestilence, for David's sin in numbering the people. And by the ministry of an angel he slew in the camp of the Assyrians in one night, an hundred and eighty-five thousand. And Acts xii. 23. it is said, that *the angel of the Lord smote Herod*, for receiving the blasphemous acclamations of the people.

Nay,



Nay, the angels shall be the instruments and executioners of God's vengeance upon the wicked, at the judgment of the great day. So the Judge himself tells us, Matt. xiii. 49, 50. *So shall it be at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

And that particular angels do preside over empires and kingdoms, and sway the weighty affairs of them; and by a secret and invisible hand manage and bring about great changes and revolutions, both Jews and Christians have collected with great probability and consent from Daniel x. where there is mention made of the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstanding the angel that was sent to Daniel, and of Michael a chief prince assisting him. And of this ministry of angels, in the government of kingdoms, Clemens Alexandrinus speaks, as of a thing out of all controversy. I proceed to the

Third thing, which I principally intended, and seems to be chiefly designed in the text: and this is the special office and employment of good angels, in regard to good men; and for this the Apostle expressly tells us, that *they are sent forth to minister for them*, that is, in their behalf, and for their benefit, *who shall be heirs of salvation*. In which words there are three things very considerable for our instruction and comfort.

1. Their particular designation and appointment for this employment, expressed in these words, *sent forth*, ἀποστέλλόμενοι, as if they were particularly commissioned and appointed by God for this very end. God himself doth superintend all affairs, and by his particular designation and

and command, the angels do fulfil his word, and execute the pleasure of his good will toward us. Hence it is so frequently said in Scripture, that God sent his angel to such or such a person, for such or such purposes.

2. You have here the general end of their employment; for good men; they are sent forth on our behalf, and for our benefit; to take care of us and protect us, to succour and comfort, to direct and assist, to rescue and deliver us.

3. Here is the more special end of their employment in regard to good men, intended in those words, *for them who shall be heirs of salvation*; hereby signifying, that the angels are employed about good men, with regard more particularly to their eternal happiness, and for the conducting and furthering of the great affair of their everlasting salvation. This certainly is our greatest concernment; and therefore they have a more particular charge and care of us in regard to this.

It was a common opinion among the heathens and a constant and firmly believed tradition among the Jews (the Sadducees only excepted, who did not believe there were angels and spirits) that every man, at least every good man, had a guardian angel appointed him by God, to take a special care of him and his concerns, both spiritual and temporal; to guard him from dangers, to direct and prosper him in his way, and to comfort and deliver him in his affliction and distress. And therefore we find among the Jewish prayers, used by them at this day, a particular prayer, wherein they request of God, to command the angels who have the care of human affairs, to help and assist,



to preserve and deliver them. But especially they believed good angels in their attendance upon good men, to be very active and diligent to incline them to good, and to encourage them therein, by holy emotions and suggestions, by secret comfort and assistances, and by opposing evil spirits, and defending us against their assaults, and by countermining their malicious designs and attempts upon us. And accordingly we find that the best men among the Jews did stedfastly believe, if not the particular guardianship of angels, and that every good man had his particular angel assigned to him by God, to take the particular charge of him; yet the common ministry of good angels, about good men; and their more especial care of particular persons, upon particular and great occasions, to protect them from temporal evils, and to promote and prosper their temporal affairs and concerns.

Of this Abraham, *the father of the faithful*, and *the friend of God*, was most firmly persuaded, at least in matters of great moment and concernment to us, as appears by his discourse with his steward, when he was sending him to treat of a match for his son, Gen. xxiv. 40. *The Lord (says he) before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way.* And David, *the man after God's own heart*, does more than once declare his confident belief of the watchful care and ministry of angels about good men, Psal. xxxiv. 7. *The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him, and delivereth them.* And Ps. xci. 11, 12. speaking of the good man, who putteth his trust and confidence in God, he tells him for his

his comfort and security, that the holy angels have a particular charge of him to preserve him from all the mischiefs and dangers to which he is exposed; *he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

So that according to the persuasion of those two excellent persons, and of greatest renown for piety in all the Old Testament, very much of the safety and the success of good men, even in their temporal concerns, is to be ascribed to the vigilant care and protection of good angels. And though this be seldom visible and sensible to us, yet we have great reason, upon so great testimonies, to assent to the truth of it. And there is no reason I think to doubt, but that God's care extends now to Christians, as well as it did to the Jews; and that the angels have as much kindness for us, as they had for the Jews; and there is no reason to think, that the angels are now either dead or idle.

Our Saviour tells us, that they cannot die; and our reason tells us that a pure spirit is an active principle; and the Scripture represents angels as all flame and wings. Evil spirits are believed by Christians to be as active now, to all purposes of harm and mischief, as ever: and why should any man imagine, that good spirits are not as intent and busy to do good? The Apostle, I am sure, tells us in the text, that the angels in common, all of them, do employ their service about us, and wait to do good offices to us: *Are they not all (says he) ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?*



And our Saviour, Matt. xviii. 10. seems to approve and confirm the tradition of the Jews, concerning particular guardian angels belonging to every one that believed in him, that is, to every Christian: *Take heed (says he) that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.* And this seems likewise to have been a received opinion among the first Christians; for we find, Acts xii. 15. that when Peter was miraculously released out of prison by an angel, and came to the house where the Christians were assembled to pray for him, and one told them, *that Peter was at the door, they said it was his angel;* thinking that he himself was fast in prison: for which saying there could be no reason, had there not been a current opinion among them of guardian angels.

And because the providence of God is more peculiarly concerned in conducting men to eternal happiness, it is very credible, that God should more especially ordain the ministry of angels about good men, for the furtherance of their salvation. And so the Apostle tells us in the text; *are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?* Nay, our Saviour, in that remarkable place I mentioned before, Matt. xvii. 10. seems to intimate, that angels of a higher rank and quality are assigned guardians and guides to those that believed on him; *but I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven:* An allusion to the manner of earthly kings, upon whom not all the servants, but the chief of the nobility do

do more immediately attend, and stand continually in their presence; for to behold the face of the king, and to stand in his presence, are phrases used in Scripture to signify immediate attendance upon his person. So that by this manner of expression our Saviour doth most significantly intimate, in what esteem good men are with God, whose care and protection he commits to the chief of the angels, to those who are nearest to him, and in highest favour and honour with him; as if he had said, their angels are not of the ordinary rank, but such as are admitted to a more immediate attendance upon the great King and Governor of the world.

And no doubt it is for no mean end that such high and glorious spirits are employed about us; it is chiefly for the furtherance of our salvation; for the purchasing whereof, the Son of God himself, *whom all the angels of heaven worship*, came down from heaven, and appeared and suffered in our nature, that we may one day *be made like to the angels*, and dwell where they are, and may *continually behold the face of our Father which is in heaven as they do*. And in order to this end, it is very probable that good angels are ready to do good offices, just contrary to those of evil spirits, that is, to employ their best diligence and endeavour for the salvation of men; and that they are very sedulous and officious to restrain and pull them back from sin, and to excite and solicit them to that which is good; and, in a word, to do all they can to help forward the repentance and conversion of sinners. And this may reasonably be collected from that passage of our Saviour, Luke xv. 10. where he tells us, *that there is joy in the presence*



*sence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.* And if they be so glad of the repentance of a sinner, we may easily imagine how forward they are, to further and promote so good a work. And when sinners are brought to repentance, we have no reason to doubt, but that the angels are as ready to assist their progress in goodness.

It hath been a general, and I think not ill grounded opinion, both of the Jews and Heathens, that good angels are more especially present with us, and observant of us, and assistant to us, in the performance of all acts of religion; that they are particularly present at our prayers: and therefore the Jews speak of a particular angel for this purpose, whom they call the angel of prayer; that they observe our vows, and our breach or performance of them. So Solomon seems to intimate, Eccles. v. 4, 6. *When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools; pay that which thou hast vowed. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin:* that is, do not intangle thy life with a rash vow, which the frailty of human nature may make thee afterward to break; *neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error;* that is, do not in the presence of the angel who attends upon thee, and observes thee, betray thine own error and rashness. This I take to be the meaning of this difficult passage, *let not thy mouth cause thy flesh to sin, neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error.*

But the angels are yet more particularly present in the places and at the times of God's public worship. The placing of the cherubims in the Holy of Holies, seems to signify the presence

presence of the angels in our most religious addresses to God: and Plutarch says, that the angels are the overseers of divine service. Therefore we ought to behave ourselves with all modesty, reverence, and decency in the worship of God, out of regard to the angels, who are there present, and observe our carriage and behaviour. And to this the Apostle plainly hath respect in that place, which by interpreters hath been thought so difficult, 1 Cor. xi. 10. where he says, *that, for this cause*, in the assembly of Christians for the worship of God, *the woman ought to have a veil upon her head*, in token of subjection to her husband, *because of the angels*; that is, to be decently and modestly attired in the church, because of the presence of the holy angels; before whom we should compose ourselves to the greatest external gravity and reverence, which the angels behold and observe, but cannot penetrate into the inward devotion of our minds, which God only can do; and therefore with regard to him who sees our hearts, we should more particularly compose our minds to the greatest sincerity and seriousness in our devotion: which I would to God we would all duly consider, all the while we are exercised in the worship of God, who chiefly regards our hearts. But we ought likewise to be very careful of our external behaviour, with a particular regard to the angels, who are present there, to see and observe the outward decency and reverence of our carriage and deportment; of which we are very careful in the presence even of an earthly prince when he either speaks to us, or we make any address to him. And surely much more ought we to be so, when we are in the



immediate presence of God, and of his holy angels, every one of whom is a much greater prince, and of greater power, than any of the princes of this world. But how little is this considered, I speak to our shame, and by how few among us!

And as the angels are helpful to good men, in working out their salvation, throughout the course of their lives; so at the hour of death, they stand by them, to comfort them and assist them in that needful and dismal time, in that last and great conflict of frail mortality with death and the powers of darkness; to receive their expiring spirits into their charge, and to conduct them safely into the mansions of the blessed. And to this purpose also the Jews had a tradition, that the angels wait upon good men at their death, to convey their souls into paradise: which is very much countenanced by our Saviour, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 22. where it is said, *that when Lazarus died, he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.*

Nay, that the angels have some charge and care of the bodies of good men after death, may not improbably be gathered from that passage in St. Jude, ver. 9. where Michael the archangel is said to have *contended with the devil, about the body of Moses.* What the ground of this controversy betwixt them was, may be most probably explained by a passage, Deut. xxxiv. 6. where it is said, *that God took particular care, probably by an angel, concerning the burying of Moses in a certain valley; and it is added, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.* The devil it seems had a fair prospect

spect of laying a foundation for idolatry, in the worship of Moses after his death; if he could have gotten the disposal of his body, to have buried it in some known and public place. And no doubt, it would have gratified him not a little, to have made him, who was so declared an enemy to idolatry all his life, an occasion of it, after his death. But this God thought fit to prevent, in pity to the people of Israel, whom he saw upon all occasions so prone to idolatry; and for that reason committed it to the charge of Michael the archangel, to bury his body secretly; and this was the thing which Michael the archangel contended with the devil about.

But before I pass from this, I cannot but take notice of one memorable circumstance in this contest, mentioned likewise by St. Jude, in these words, *yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation.* His duty restrained him from it, and probably his discretion too: as he durst not offend God, in doing a thing so much beneath the dignity and perfection of his nature; so he could not but think, that the devil would have been too hard for him at railing; a thing to which as the angels have no disposition, so I believe that they have no talents, no faculty at it. The cool consideration whereof should make all men, especially those who call themselves divines, and especially in controversies about religion, ashamed and afraid of this manner of disputing; since *Michael the archangel, even when he disputed with the devil, durst not bring against him a railing accusation.*



But to proceed. This we are sure of, that the angels shall be the great ministers and instruments of the resurrection of our bodies, and the re-union of them to our souls. For so our Blessed Saviour has told us, Matt. xxiv. 30, 31. *That when the Son of Man shall come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory; he shall send his angels to gather the elect, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

Thus I have as briefly as I could, and so far as the Scripture hath gone before us, to give us light in this matter, endeavoured to shew the several ways wherein good angels do minister in behalf of them who shall be heirs of salvation. All that now remains, is to draw some inferences from this discourse, and so I shall conclude.

First, what hath been said upon this argument, and so abundantly proved from Scripture, may serve to establish us in the belief of this truth, and to awaken us to a due consideration of it. That the angels are invisible to us, and that we are seldom sensible of their presence, and the good offices they do us, is no sufficient reason against the truth and reality of the thing; if by other arguments we are convinced of it. For by the same reason we may almost as well call in question the existence of God, and of our own souls; neither of which do fall under the notice of our senses; and yet by other arguments we are sufficiently convinced of them both. So in this case, the general consent and tradition of mankind, concerning the existence of angels, and their ministry about us, especially being confirmed to us by clear and express testimony of Holy Scripture, ought to be

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abundant evidence to us; when we consider that so general a consent must have a proportionable cause; which can be no other, but a general tradition grounded at first upon Revelation, and derived down to all succeeding ages, from the first spring and original of mankind; and since confirmed by manifold revelations of God, both in the Old and New Testament.

But yet I am sensible, that all this is no conviction to the perverse and contentious. Men will not believe even the evidence of sense itself, when they are strongly prepossessed and prejudiced to the contrary: for do we not see great numbers of men, even so many as have the face to call themselves the Catholic Church, that can make a shift, when they have a mind, either to believe or disbelieve things contrary to the plainest evidence of their senses? All that I shall say farther about this matter, is, that this doctrine of angels is not a peculiar doctrine either of the Jewish or Christian religion, but the general doctrine of all religions that ever were; and therefore cannot be objected against by any but Atheists.

And yet after all, I know not whence it comes to pass, that this great truth, which is so comfortable to mankind, is so very little considered by us. Perhaps the corruption of so great a part of the Christian church, in the point of the worship of angels, may have run us so far into the other extreme, as scarcely to acknowledge any benefit we receive by them. But surely we may believe they do us good, without any obligation to pray to them; and may own them as the ministers of God's providence, without making them the objects of our worship.



I confess it seems to me a very odd thing, that the power of the devil, and his influence upon men, and the particular vigilancy and activity of evil spirits to tempt us to sin, should be so readily owned, and so sensibly talked of among Christians; and yet the assistance of good angels should be so little taken notice of, and considered by us. The Scripture speaks plainly of both, and the reasons for believing both are equal: for God forbid but that good angels should be as officious and forward to do us good, as the devil and his angels are malicious and busy to do us mischief. And indeed it would be very hard with mankind, if we had not as much reason to hope for the assistance and protection of good spirits, as we have cause to fear the malice and fury of the bad. Good angels are certainly as powerful, and have as strong a propension and inclination to do good, as the devil has to do harm; and the number of good angels is probably much greater than of evil spirits. The biggest numbers that are used in Scripture, are applied to good angels. Dan. vii. 10. it is said of *the angels about God's throne, that thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.* And Rev. v. 11. *the number of them* is said to be, *ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousand of thousands.* And the Apostle to the Hebrews, ch. xii. 22. calls them, *an innumerable company of angels.*

What then should be the reason, that men should be so apt to own the snares and temptations which the devil lays before us, in all our ways; but take so little notice of the attendance  
and

and good offices done to us by good spirits? I can imagine but these two reasons, and I am sorry I can find no better; that we are more mindful of injuries than of benefits: and are glad to take in others for the excuse of our faults; but are loth any should come in for a share in the good that is done by us. And yet methinks it should be a very comfortable consideration to us, against the enmity and cunning of the devil and his angels; that the holy angels of God are as intent and industrious to do us good, and to help forward our salvation, as evil spirits can be to work our ruin and destroy us.

Secondly, we should with much thankfulness acknowledge the great goodness of God, who takes such care of us, as to appoint his angels, and to give them particular commission and charge concerning us, to protect and assist us in all our ways, and especially to promote the great concernment of our eternal happiness: and that not only some particular and inferior spirits, but the chief ministers of this great King of the world, those that *stand in his presence, and behold his face*; and not a few of these, but the whole order of them are employed about us. So the Apostle seems to say, by the question which he puts in the text, *are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister?* That is, all, at one time or other. And though they be principally appointed to minister to us in order to our salvation; yet we have no reason to doubt but God employs them many times for our temporal safety; and makes use of them more especially in those great revolutions, in which his cause and religion are more immediately concerned.



In such a case, it is not at all incredible, that God should give his angels a particular charge concerning those that fight his battles; to pitch about their camps, and secretly to assist them against their enemies, and to ward off, and put by many dangerous blows and thrusts, which are made at them; and wonderfully to preserve them, when the instruments of death fly about them, and do execution on every side of them. To what can we ascribe such and so many remarkable deliverances of persons upon whom so much depends; but either to the immediate hand of God, or to the ministry of angels? And where God is provided so abundantly with such powerful beings and ministers of his will, though they may be invisible to us, yet there is great reason to believe, that he very seldom works without them.

And now what an astonishing regard is this, which the great God is pleased to have for the sons of men, that he should make the whole creation serviceable to us; not only the visible creation, for the support of our bodies, and the diversion of our minds; but even the noblest of all his creatures, the great and glorious inhabitants of the invisible world, mightily surpassing us mortal men, in the simplicity and purity of their nature, in the quickness and largeness of their understandings, and in their power and vigour of acting: I say, that God should give these excellent and glorious beings the charge over us, and send them forth to minister to us, for the safeguard of our persons, for the success of our affairs, and for the security and furtherance of our eternal salvation! *Lord, what is man that thou art thus mindful of him,*  
that

that when *thou madest him lower than the angels* thou shouldst yet *make the angels to minister unto him!*

Thirdly, if the angels have the particular charge of good men, we should take heed how we despise, or be any way injurious to them: for how despicable soever they may appear to us, they are certainly very dear to God; since he deems them so considerable, as to employ his chief ministers about them, and to commit the charge of them to those who by their office do more immediately attend upon himself. This is our Saviour's own argument, *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, their angels do continually behold the face of your Father, which is in heaven\**. With how much contempt soever we may look upon a poor good man, he hath friends and patrons of a higher sort than any of the princes of this world.

Fourthly, If God appointed angels to be ministering spirits in our behalf, we may thence very reasonably conclude, that God did not intend that we should worship them. This seems to be a clear consequence, if the reasoning of the angel in the Revelation be good; where he forbids St. John to worship him, *because he was his fellow servant*. Yea the consequence seems to be yet stronger from the text; that if they be not only fellow-servants, but do in some sort minister unto us, then we are not to worship them.

And yet this practice is openly avowed in the church of Rome; though it be reprov'd so very severely by the Apostle, as an apostasy from Christianity. *Let no man (says he) deceive*

\* Matth. xviii. 10.



*deceive you, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels; not holding the head\**; as if it were a renouncing of Christ, out of a pretended humility, to make use of other mediators beside him to the Father. And notwithstanding also that the angel in the Revelation does so vehemently forbid it, *ὅρα μὴ*, by no means, upon no terms to do it: and he forbids it for such a reason, as makes it for ever unlawful; namely, that we ought not to worship those who serve and worship God together with us; *do it not, says the angel, I am thy fellow-servant, worship thou God.* In which words, he plainly directs us to the sole and proper object of our worship.

Bellarmino, the great champion of the Popish cause, never used more gross and apparent shuffling, than in answer to this text. He says first, why are we reprov'd for doing what St. John did? To which the answer is very easy; because St. John himself was reprov'd by an angel, for doing what he did. And now that his question is answered, one might, methinks, ask him a cross question or two. Why does the church of Rome presume to do that which an angel does so expressly forbid to be done? Or was it fit for St. John to worship one, who (according to Bellarmine) was so ignorant in the doctrine of the Catholic Church, as to reprove him for doing his duty? As is evident from his second crafty answer to this text, That St. John did well to give due worship to the angel: and yet it is plain from this text, that the angel did not think the worship which St. John gave him, to be his due.

It is very hard to imagine, but that a man of Bellarmine's understanding did intend to give  
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\* Coloss. ii. 18, 19.

up the cause, in his answers to this text: but if he was in earnest, then the matter is brought to this plain and short issue; whether it be fitter for us to believe a cardinal of Rome, or an angel of God?

Lastly, We should imitate the holy angels, by endeavouring to serve God as they do, in ministering to the good of others. Whilst we are in the body, in this state of infirmity and imperfection, though we cannot serve God with the same activity and vigour that the blessed angels do, yet we may in the same sincerity, and with the same true pleasure and delight.

And we should learn also of them, to condescend to the meanest services, for the good of others. If the angels, who are no ways allied to us, do so much excel us in the dignity and perfection of their nature, (for though David says, that *God made man a little lower than the angels*; his meaning is, that he made him next below the angels in the rank of beings; but yet very distant from them in perfection) I say if those glorious creatures, who are the chief of the ways and works of God, do not think much to humble themselves to be ministers on our behalf; shall we be so proud as to think much to stoop to the lowest offices, to serve one another?

You see, my brethren, what is the constant work and employment of the blessed spirits above; to do good to men, especially in order to their eternal happiness: this is the highest degree of charity, and charity is the highest perfection of men and angels. So that to employ ourselves, with all our minds, and with all our might, to help forward the salvation of others,  
is



is to be good angels (I had almost said to be a kind of gods) to men.

I hope that we all of us do hope one day to be like the angels, in the purity and perfection of their nature. So our Saviour has told us, that *at the resurrection we shall be like the angels*: now as they are the patterns of our hope and happiness, so let us make them the examples of our duty and obedience: according as our Saviour hath taught us to pray, *that God's will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven*; that is, that we may serve God, and do his will here on earth, (so far as the infirmity of our nature and of our present state will admit) with the same readiness and diligence, with the same chearfulness and zeal, that the holy and blessed angels do in heaven. And let us aspire continually in our minds after that blessed time, when we shall be free from sin and sorrow, from affliction and pain, from diseases and death; when we shall serve God without distraction, and do his will without weariness, and shall *be for ever with the Lord, amidst an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect*.

Finally, Let us bless God, as for all the visible effects of his merciful providence toward us, so likewise for the invisible aids and protection of his holy angels; many times probably vouchsafed to us, when we are but little aware of it. But above all, let us bless him for his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who *was made a little lower than the angels*, that is, a mortal man; *that by the suffering of death for our sakes, he might be clothed with glory and honour, according to the working of that mighty power which God wrought*

*in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. To him, O Father, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.*





## On St. Luke's Day.

October 18th.

By Dr. ADAM LITTLETON.

COLOSSIANS, Chap. iv. Ver. 14.

*Luke the beloved physician, and Demas greet you.*

**B**ELOVED Christians, if that which most of those who handle holy writings affirm be true, that what was written to any of these particular churches or persons, doth by fair proportion belong, and is properly applicable to the whole church, and to every congregation and person, that is a member thereof, which the great Apostle\* himself also in several places seems to own; then I may, with confidence of so good authority, say, that the beloved physician salutes you: that is, as the Syriac interpreter has, more pertinently to the physician's purpose, who was himself a Syrian, rendered the word, *Luke asks your health*, inquires it and wishes it. For so innocent was his practice, that he desired none; and was willing to prevent the need of physic for his friends by his prayers for their health; which was one thing made him questionless to deserve the title, the Apostle has here bestowed on him, of the *beloved physician*.

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\* Rom. iv. 23. 1 Cor. ix 10. & x. 11.

Do not be startled, that he brings along with him a suspicious person named Demas, a wealthy merchant; and one who, though he has been groundlessly traduced by many as a renegade to his religion, for leaving the Apostle some small time upon occasions of his own affairs; yet has been sufficiently vindicated by others more learned, and we shall, ere we have done, say something to clear his reputation, that his company may be no disparagement to St. Luke our blessed Evangelist and beloved physician. *Luke the beloved physician, and Demas greet you.*

Where we have to consider,

I. The Evangelist's name; *Luke*.

II. His profession or employment *in seculo*; *the physician*.

III. The obliging character of his profession; *the beloved physician*. Or rather, as I think, from the propriety of the Greek; his church-relation, as a Christian, as an Evangelist: ὁ ἰατρός, ὁ ἀγαπητός, *the physician, the beloved*; that is, as he is elsewhere styled by this very Apostle, *the brother, his fellow-traveller, and fellow-labourer* \* in the work of the Gospel.

IV. His companion, that is here and other-where joined with him; *Demas*.

V. Their civility and Christian affection; *they greet you*.

Of these we shall endeavour to speak so orderly and profitably, that together with the commemoration of the Saint, we shall interweave some useful remarks for our own instruction.

I. Of his name, because that is a meer grammatical nicety, I shall not say much. Drusius tells us, that some have in vain sought for the original

\* Philem. 24.



original of it in his own country among the Syrians, and like enough. And himself gives us his opinion, that he was called from Lucius, Λουκῆς; and that *a luce*; as from *rufus* we read Ρεφῆς. And so Epaphras by contraction is the same with Epaphroditus; and this Demas, it may be, the same as that Demetrius, John iii. 12. who was well reported among the brethren; and some other names there are of the like stamp. I shall not gainsay that learned person's conjecture, (tho' I have one of my own to offer) seeing the reason of the name, taken, as he gives it, from *light*, doth so excellently well besit our Evangelist, for the brightness of his parts, and the elegance of his style; as being an illuminator, a limner with his pen, as well as his pencil.

But if I may have leave to guess too; since it is more than probable that the name is of a Latin descent, and we meet with one Lucius of Cyrene, reckoned among the Prophets and teachers, Acts xiii. 1. who is also mentioned Romans xvi. another from our St. Luke; we do affirm, that without the help of a Greek diminution, the word Lucas of itself is a true Latin word, being a denominative from Lucania, a country of Italy, and used by good authors: whence elephants for being first seen in those parts were by them called *Lucæ boves*.

Now though St. Luke were a Syrian, yet it was very usual for the eastern nations, after they were made provincial to Rome, to put on Roman names, whatever names they might have before, to ingratiate themselves with the conquering people, and to testify their freedom, or to render themselves perhaps by that means  
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the more capable of enfranchisement. Thus we read of John, by a Hebrew name, Barnabas his sister's son, whose surname was Mark a Latin name, Acts xv. 37. John the name given him at his circumcision; Mark, a name I suppose taken up after, whether in compliance with the Romans, or at his conversion to Christianity. Thus Paul himself, formerly called Saul; whether at his circumcision he had two names given him, as Origen says, one Hebrew as a Jew, the other Latin, as born in a city of the Roman freedom\*; which if it had been, he would surely, when he pleaded that freedom before the captain, have then made known his Roman name too, as a confirmation of it; or whether at his baptism he was so named by Ananias, as St. Ambrose saith, or at his conversion, as St. Austin will have it, he changed his own name, to shew at once the humility of his mind and the littleness of his stature; or rather, as St. Jerom rightly gathers from the text, he was so called from his converting Sergius Paulus the deputy of the island; for all along from his own conversion, Acts ix. to that passage his style is Saul, and then he is first called Paul, Acts xiii. 9. and ever after goes by that name in the Acts, and names himself so in his Epistles.

St. Luke then, of whose very name we find no mention all along in the history of St. Paul, till he comes to Rome, in those Epistles he sends thence, might accordingly, having had another name before, take up this new one, when he came with Paul to Rome, to oblige the Italians, of whom mention is made in the close of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and amongst whom no

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question

\* Acts xxi. 39, & xxii. 27.



question but St. Luke, by St. Paul's order, was conversant in preaching the gospel.

Whether upon this ground, popes, when they climb the chair once, alter their names, and even the ordinary priests change theirs, when they list themselves into any religious order, matters not. Certainly these do it not upon such honest designs ; for this shifting of names must needs be to the priests, when they are sent abroad, no inconsiderable advantage in the secure practice of their equivocations : whereas these primitive teachers, beside some civil reasons for their so doing, touched at before, if they did it for any other reason at any time, they did it not for their own concealment, but for the endearment of the people by an innocent compliance with their customs and appellations. This for his name.

II. As to his profession and secular practice, to which he had been bred, and wherein he was employed ; both before and likely after his turning Christian, he was a physician, nay *the physician* ; where the article doth not, as Erasmus seems to intimate, serve for distinction, as if this Luke the physician were not the same with the Evangelist, but is put by way of eminency, that he was an excellent person in that skill ; or possibly that at that time he was the only person among the Christians of that character.

And here consider with me the wise contrivances of God's providence for his church, how from time to time he has always picked and culled out choice and fit instruments for the carrying on of gospel-work ; and in this sense it is that St. Paul is called a chosen vessel \*, not so much in respect of God's eternal election, as in  
regard

\* Acts ix. 15.

regard of his usefulness and fitness to that service God had designed him; that, according to the Hellenistical idiom, he was ἐκλεκτόν σκεῦος, one that would make a choice instrument in God's hand for the propagation of Christian faith and the building up of the church.

Now whereas at first it was somewhat necessary for him to make use of illiterate and unlikely persons, whose education had been no way suitable to the purposes of instructing people, nor their interests in the world such as might recommend them to the government of societies; the offices of the church mainly resolving themselves into these two heads of governing and teaching: I say it was necessary at first, that such persons should be made use of, that it might appear to the world, that the doctrine and design of Christianity proceeded not from men, but came immediately from God himself, who did thus attest it with miracles, and enable the preachers of it with power from above, with such a spirit as might far transcend all the ways and sects of human philosophy, and all the most exquisite attainments of the most advanced reason, by furnishing his instruments with extraordinary gifts and miraculous endowments. Yet this method was not to continue long; nor is God obliged, nor is he wont to work unnecessary miracles.

Wherefore when the Gospel had been now proclaimed and owned, and had gained professytes up and down in other countries as well as in Judea; when the church was in some settlement and probability of flourishing, and that there was now no much longer need of miracles, which were only intended for the conviction



tion of unbelievers ; it pleased God to apply to ordinary means, by degrees to call in human aids, and to consecrate the advantages of literature and good education, and of worldly interest too, to the service of his church ; by taking in such persons, as either by their great abilities or worthy examples might both promote and adorn the Christian profession.

See then and wonder with me at the absurdity of those who decry human learning, looking upon it not only as needless, but dangerous to religion ; whereas there is no other more probable way left of preserving and securing it ; the Holy Scriptures themselves, which are the great instrument of our religion, being not to be understood without the helps and studies of languages, history, philosophy, natural, moral, and metaphysical ; the arts of speech and eloquence ; in a word all kinds of good literature and useful knowledge.

Behold and wonder with me at the audaciousness of those who having never saluted the schools of the Prophets, from off their shop-boards jump into the chairs of teachers (shall I say) or scorers, and being utter strangers to humanity, boldly undertake divinity ; as if, poor souls, they imitated herein the first preachers of the Gospel, who though they were *fishermen* and the like, yet were men divinely inspired.

If they pretend to divine commission, which they had, they must prove it and make it good by such extraordinary gifts and graces as they were indued with. Can they speak languages ? Can they work miracles, as they did ? If they cannot, the pretence to their example is madness and presumptuous vanity.

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We do acknowledge still the gracious assistance of the *blessed Spirit*, going along with us in the use of our knowledge and acquired parts; but we dare own no such thing as inspiration, to infuse these abilities into us without our own pains and study for their acquisition.

Those who came immediately after the Apostles in the primitive church, did not commence divines at this wild rate. They were men well principled, and thoroughly seasoned in all kinds of useful learning, who had duly prepared themselves with study, that they might be able to maintain the truths and orders of the church in the ages they lived in, against the attempts and insolencies of growing schisms and heresies, and transmit them, when they had done, to posterity in their learned writings, and elaborate works.

Such was St. Paul, though miraculously converted, a great scholar, bred at the feet of Gamaliel, profoundly versed in all Jewish antiquity, a man of great parts and indefatigable industry, and impregnated with such a brave spirit and zeal for the Christian cause, as rendered him the greatest master of sacred eloquence.

Such was St. Luke his follower and amanuensis, though inspired in what he wrote, yet qualified aforehand for his undertakings by a large acquaintance with history, and an excellent command of his Greek pen, beside his skill in physic, which was so fair an ingredient toward his accomplishment, that here he goes by the style of *Luke the physician*.

And this character certainly gave him no mean advantage, not only in the exercise of his ministry by an acceptable address and easy admission, which men of that profession every where



find among persons of any civility ; but even to his understanding of Christian truths, and to the apprehending the mysteries of faith.

For having, as that study directed him, gone orderly over all the links of that chain, by which natural causes are mutually tied to one another, till he found God the supreme cause and first mover at the top ; having traced the footsteps of divine goodness through all the most minute productions of his handmaid, Nature ; and yet finding human reason puzzled, and at a loss, in giving an account of his almighty power and infinite wisdom in the least and meanest of his works ; with what pious humility must he needs entertain supernatural truths, when upon trial he had found every the plainest thing in common nature itself was mystery : and saw he had as much reason for his believing these proposals of faith, as he had for trusting the operations of sense or the collections of reason itself.

I know there is an unworthy reproach cast upon this excellent study, that it inclines men to Atheism. 'Tis true, the ignorance and corruption of men, that profess any of the three honourable faculties, bring scandal upon the faculty itself. Again, sciolists and half-witted men are those that discredit any science they meddle with. But he that pretends to the noble skill of physic, and dares to deny that which doth continually *incurrere in sensus*, that which in all his researches and experiments he must meet with at every turn, I dare to say, he is no physician ; or at least that he doth at once give his profession and his conscience too the lye.

I appeal to that great man of the profession, Galen, in his pious treatise *De usu partium* :  
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where, though there may be some mistakes, which later anatomy has found out and rectified, yet they are to be excused upon this account, that the ancients preferred a modest ignorance before that which might seem to them a cruel curiosity; and taking perhaps the dissection of human bodies to be an inhuman violation of nature, contented themselves with cutting up those creatures which had nearest resemblance to man in the situation of their parts. I am ashamed almost to name what those creatures were, (good God! what are these bodies of ours, that we should be proud of them?) they were swine and monkeys.

I do not speak this to condemn our later practice as unlawful; because this lump of flesh, when the soul is once gone, is not properly any longer man: and further, this way of carnage hath proved very beneficial to mankind, by making rare discoveries to the great advantage of the art of health. For since we, who live in the dregs of time, have multiplied our diseases according to our vices, such both of them as were not known to the ancients, whose ignorance is the more excusable, that what they wanted in skill, they had in virtue; I say since it is thus, all the courses that physic can take for its improvements, are little enough to answer those necessities our sins have brought upon us, not only as just punishments, but as natural effects.

I shall not go about to harangue in praise of this noble science of medicine, which the wise man bids us honour, but only speak of it as my subject leads me, so as it may conduce to religion and piety: which as on the one hand in its



rational inquiries it disposes the professor to an acquiescence in matters of faith, so on the other hand in its application may assist the patient to the attainment of good manners.

These students of nature prove sometimes happy masters of morality, who can prevail more upon a rebellious affection by one of their doses than the severest philosophers can with all their precepts and lectures; and can cure the distempers of the mind by altering the humours of the body. They will prescribe temperance for a rule of health; they will assure you, that your passion will do yourself more hurt than your adversary, and that forgiveness is a necessary charity to him out of kindness to your own body as well as soul. To make short, they can persuade men to lead a Christian life, that they may prolong their natural one.

And without doubt such a worthy physician was our St. Luke, that made use of his art to all instances of piety and virtue: so far was he from offending against any of those engagements, the sons of art are tied to in Hippocrates his oath, that he owned a higher obligation, and made his profession subservient to Christianity.

And to this end certainly was the *gift of healing*\* we read of designed, with which the Apostles and their Evangelists too, whom they sent up and down to preach in their stead, were furnished; and of which we may be sure St. Luke had his share; that there might be fairer impressions and deeper convictions wrought upon peoples minds from those saving experiences of health, they found upon their bodies. And this was our Saviour's own practice, to go about  
*teaching*

\* 1 Cor. ix. 12.

*teaching and doing good* \*, to recommend his doctrine by his cures, and to oblige people by saving them from their sicknesses to save themselves from their sins; that so he might be a compleat Saviour both of soul and body, according to that of the Psalmist, *Thou savest both man and beast* †; man, that is the rational part, the soul; and beast, that is the brutish part, the body.

And now, blessed Luke, thou having all these advantages, which either the study of nature or the practice of art could afford thee, how blessed didst thou make all people, and how beloved thyself, wherever thou camest, attended thus with thy own happy genius and God's miraculous gift to boot, which secured thy success, when thou scatteredst health as a physician, and salvation as a preacher, through all the countries round about!

We cannot but take notice of another ingenuity, which tradition has bestowed upon our Evangelist, that he was an excellent *limner* or *painter*; and if the lucky hands of some famed artists have been valued at so high a rate, that their pieces have been judged worth any money; what would be given by those who affect such curiosities, for some of St. Luke's original draughts?

That he was a virtuoso in that kind too, as well as in history and physic, I am the more apt to believe, not only in veneration to antiquity, which has so reported him, but from ocular demonstration, when I look upon his florid descriptions, particularly how graphically and to the life he sets forth the *tempest* and *shipwreck*, Acts xxvii. as if he had drawn them in colours, to  
hang

\* Acts x. 38.

† Psal. xxxvi. 6.



hang up (as the manner was) in Neptune's temple. And it is my wonder that the Church of Rome, where St. Luke was so long conversant, has no rarity of his in this kind to shew, were it but the picture of his patron St. Paul, whom he so long accompanied in his travels; or at least why they did not think it as pious and necessary a fraud to produce some such counterfeit, as to impose upon our easy faith things far more incredible, such as the travel of our Lady's house from Bethlehem to Loretto. Such a relique might have stood them in some stead to countenance their image-worship.

But alas! this is a thing that Scripture and antiquity have been wanting in, who looked upon stocks to be but *doctrines of vanities* \*. The Apostles did not so teach Christ, nor have we so learnt them. If Christ had intended that himself or his *blessed Mother* should be worshipped in that manner, the age wherein they lived abounded with ingenious artists both in painture and sculpture, as appears by Pliny in his Natural History, where he reckons up great store of them; and the church of that time would have been so careful, that we should not have wanted necessary furniture for our devotions.

But that which raises my indignation most is, that the Romanists themselves have not that care they should have in the choice and preparation of these objects or helps of their worship. For a lewd pencilman or stonecutter to take some beautiful wanton, and out of the adulterous features of a noted courtesan to copy out the amiable innocences of the *blessed Virgin's* countenance, makes the idolatry of those who set

\* Jer. x. 8.

set her up in this masquerade for adoration, to become ridiculously abominable.

But we have said too much perhaps of this, and enough at least of St. Luke's secular profession, that he was a physician; it is time we now speak of his spiritual relation as a member and officer of the Christian Church. For though we do readily acknowledge, he might be beloved as a physician; *the beloved physician*; yet beloved is not here ἀγαπημένος, a participle, but ἀγαπητός, a noun, as St. Hierom has observed, and stands apart as a distinct character of itself, *the physician, the beloved*; and has another useful and usual notion, as it signifies one related to us in church-fellowship, and as he is called 2 Cor. viii. *the brother*.

III. There is, at least ought to be, love among brethren. Not to speak of the ties of nature, country, other relations, which are so many instances of brotherhood and persuasives of love; we are properly and truly such, brethren as to religion. We have one and the same Father; so Christ has taught us to pray *Our Father*, and so himself at mention of his departure avers it, *I go to my Father and to your Father\**; and thus we are Christ's brethren too. Again we have one and the same mother, the Church; for if we leave and disown her, we lose our right to our Father too, and thus we are Christ's members, as he is head of his body, the Church. These are great arguments for love, that we are children of one Father, and fellow-members of one body. And therefore Christ has made love the very badge and cognizance of his religion.

By

\* John xx. 17.



*By this, says he, shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another\*.*

Blessed Lord, if this be the character and mark of discipleship, how few disciples hast thou left in the world? if this be the *κρίτηριον*, and trial of a Christian, God forgive us, what is become of our Christianity?

O help me a little to bemoan the divisions and consequently the decays of religion amongst us; now that a foolish and uncharitable zeal has taken up the room of a true Christian love; and contrary to all duty and reason, we make that the ground of our animosities, our religion, which ought to be the main argument and highest obligation of our brotherly love and union.

To return to our *beloved physician*; he was no ordinary brother of the common rank, but one who had peculiar reasons to make him beloved. Hear what St. Paul says of him in that 2 Cor. viii. 18. *the brother, whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the Churches*: by which, say interpreters, is to be meant his preaching of the Gospel, for which he was so generally commended; but yet it must not be confined to so narrow a sense, as to exclude his writing of the Gospel; though perhaps at that time not made public, since the words will well bear that sense too, *who is praised for the Gospel*. For he was an Evangelist in both senses, an admirable preacher, and an incomparable writer of the Gospel.

But having said so much of the physician, we shall want time to speak of the Evangelist; seeing that part of his character would alone take up

\* Joh. xiii. 35.

up a just discourse; nor must we be so injurious either to his virtues, as to think to comprize them all in one hour's compass, or to your patience, as to extend them to a larger allowance of time. And beside, as we have hitherto addressed ourselves to St. Luke, so we ought not wholly to neglect his companion Demas.

IV. *Luke and Demas both greet you*; and so they are joined in one common remembrance to Philemon, but with more company; *Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow-labourers*\*. He stands there under a fair character, nor will Luke be ashamed of his and the Apostle's fellow-labourer.

I know he is charged in the Epistle of the day, 2 Tim. iv. 10. for *forsaking the Apostle and loving this present world*. Why! he might *forsake the Apostle*, and yet not quit his Christianity and renounce his faith; he might so far *love this present world*, as to go home and take order about his worldly affairs; he might depart to Thessalonica, a noble mart-town, to look after his merchandize, and yet return to Rome, and serve Paul and the Gospel again, and not deserve them neither, while he was absent, in that other place whither he was gone for a time. And so Grotius, no mean man in interpreting of Scriptures, judges he did.

It was a fault then, that he deserted Paul and his ministry, for that time; but he repented, he came back, he removed his effects to Rome, and returned into St. Paul's attendance and his favour too. The whole stress of Demas his case lies upon this, whether that Epistle to Timothy were writ before this to the Colossians, and that

to

\* Ver. 24.



to Philemon. If so, Demas is clear, that he returned to his duty, which St. Paul complains he had forsaken. And that it was so, one reason offers itself to me upon haste by the by. There he bids Timothy bring Mark along with him, and in that to Philemon, he mentions Mark together with Demas, which is an argument that Mark was come, and so that the epistle to Philemon was after that to Timothy. Nay Mark himself had been tardy in the same fault as Demas was, having left the Apostle in Pamphylia; which he so highly repented, that rather than take the deserter along with him, he fell out with Barnabas, and parted with both uncle and kinsman; and yet, ye see, was afterward reconciled.

It is no better than malice, so to censure any man taken in a fault, and run him down for a slight miscarriage, as not to give him leave to rise again and recover himself by repentance; as most interpreters have hitherto served poor Demas. Let Demas and me be humbled under the sense of our sins, but let not by-standers proudly insult over us, when we are down. Others miscarriages should make us reflect upon our own, so that exercising the severity (of caution at least) upon ourselves, we may reach out a hand of charity to them, to help them up again. And this as our Christianity mainly obliges us to, so it is no more than common civility requires at our hands; which is our next and last stage.

V. *Luke and Demas salute you.* Salutation was a point of civility, used, as by Heathens, so by Christians too. It is no design of religion to make the professors of it rude or sullen.

It

It was the custom of the primitive times, to end their public offices with mutual salutations; they embraced and kissed, with a *Pax vobiscum*, *Peace be with you*; whence this kiss is called by Tertullian, an ancient writer, *signaculum orationis*, the seal and close of the Church's prayers. Upon which account it was, that St. Paul concludes all his Epistles with the salutations of their friends abroad, before he dismisses them with a blessing, and gives order that, after the reading of them, they should salute one another with a *holy kiss*. But this custom, as it was familiarly practised also by the Heathens in their common meetings, and was for the trouble of it and other inconveniencies forbidden by Tiberius, so was not long retained in the Church, as the Annalist informs us.

Look back upon Old Testament times. Abraham, a great man and a great saint, bows himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth\*. These were men of another religion, and probably much his inferiors too in quality and estate; yet he scruples not to afford them the ordinary civility and compliment of the Eastern countries.

And shall any Christian grudge his due respects to a superior by pulling off his hat, and the like received fashions in Europe?

Scripture is the rule of faith and good manners. It teaches us then no more to be unmannerly, than it does to be infidels. Ay, but it is belike an idolatrous ceremony. Strange times we have lived to see, when decency in the service of God must be termed superstition, and  
civility

\* Gen. xxiii. 7.



civility to our betters must upon pretence of conscience be laid aside as a piece of idolatry.

I have but one note more, which comes home to the day, and I have done. It is civil to salute, it is as uncivil not to salute again; *salutantum non resalutare*. We have this morning according to the Church's appointment returned St. Luke's salutation; I hope to God's praise, and somewhat to our own benefit.

Holy-days, I confess, are but the Church's institutions. What then? Are they ere a whit the less to be observed? Or would you have an exprefs command of Scripture for it? If this be it, I am afraid, if we meet with a peevish opponent, that will demand Scripture for every thing we do, we must not serve God at all. For we must serve him at some time or other, in some place or other, and after some form or other; and where will you find precept for all or any of these?

To limit ourselves to the circumstance of time, which is our present business, I fear the Lord's Day itself will be in some danger, if we must be obliged to produce a direct command out of God's word for it. If we will not stand to the Church's authority and practice for these and many other things, where Scripture has not determined plainly, I foresee nought but confusion; for when that pale is once broken down, there is no end of disputing; which is the reason of our so many divisions, because the minds of people are not bound up in one common obedience: and when once they have departed from their obedience to the Church, they quickly throw away that love they owe to their fellow-christians,

tians, and that reason too, by which they should guide themselves.

Let us, as becomes good Christians, in duty to the church, to God and ourselves too, commemorate the holy lives and virtuous actions, the constant sufferings and precious deaths of God's saints and servants, that have gone before us; and beg of God his grace, that we may make that use of those advantages they have left us, in their labours, in their writings, in their examples, that as we do profess to believe *the communion of Saints* here, we may be admitted into the society and happy estate of those *blessed ones* hereafter. *Amen.*





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## On St. Simon and St. Jude's Day.

October 28th.

By Dr. MATTHEW HOLE.

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St. JUDE, Ver. I.—9.

*Jude, the servant of Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called; mercy, and peace, and love be multiplied. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints, &c.*

THE subject of this day's festival, is the remembrance of a pair of saints, St. Simon and St. Jude; who being brothers, and both Apostles, the church hath coupled them together, and celebrated their memory in one solemnity.

For St. Simon, little more is mentioned of him in Scripture beside his name, who is sometimes stiled Simon the Canaanite, and sometimes Simon the Zealot; both which, in different languages, signify the same thing, viz. one of a hot and vigorous temper, reckoned therefore of the sect of the Zealots. Ecclesiastical history tells us, that in executing his apostolical office, he went into divers and sundry countries; and among the rest, that he came to these western islands,

islands, and planted the Gospel here in Britain, where, after many troubles and difficulties undergone by him, he suffered martyrdom for the faith of Christ.

For St. Jude, he likewise, in the Gospel, is called sometimes Thaddeus, and sometimes Lebbeus; it being usual in those times to have two or three different names.

But the most memorable thing of this Apostle, is the general Epistle left behind him; wherein he exhorts to constancy and perseverance in the faith, to prevent the danger of apostasy, and escape the sore evils that befall revolters.

The Collect for this day prays God, who hath built his church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone; to grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable unto him.

To which end, the Epistle directs us to stick close to the Christian faith, as we shall see after. And in it I shall observe,

I. The inscription, in the first words, *Jude the servant of Christ*; where his styling himself *Jude the servant of Christ*, hath made some question, whether it was Jude the Apostle, or another Jude, that was after bishop of Jerusalem. But this doubt hath but a weak foundation, against the current testimony and tradition of the church; especially considering, that an Apostle of Christ signifies one sent upon his service by a commission from him, and so in effect it is all one with a *servant of Christ*, and may be expressed by the one as well as by the other. But to put this matter out of doubt,



he styles himself, in the next words, *the brother of James*; for we read so he was\*, and that can agree to no other Jude but this Apostle, who gives himself these titles, to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot, who had made that name infamous and detestable by betraying his Saviour.

For the persons to whom this Epistle is directed, it is *to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called*: that is, to all good Christians in general, and more especially to the Jewish converts, who had received the Christian faith, described here by their *sanctification by God the Father, their preservation by God the Son, and their vocation, or being called by God the Holy Ghost*. These he salutes in the following words, with wishes of all spiritual blessings, saying, *Mercy unto you, and peace and love be multiplied*: which is the common salutation of the Apostles in all their Epistles, and includes in it all manner of happiness. From the inscription I proceed,

II. To the subject-matter of this epistle; and that begins in the next verse: *Beloved* (saith he) *when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation*; that is, of the great deliverance and preservation of the Christians, from the fatal and general destruction that was coming on the unbelieving Jews; *it was needful to write unto you upon that subject, and from thence to exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints*. Where by *the faith delivered unto the saints*, we are to understand the doctrine of Christ revealed to us in his holy Gospel, which contains the way

\* Mat. xiii, 55.

way and means contrived by the wisdom, and effected by the power of God for man's salvation. This faith is said to be once delivered, that is, once for all, *simul & semel*, there being no new discovery or revelation of the will and mind of God to be made, beside that which is made already, and all additions and contradictions to it are to be rejected with an anathema.

But how would the Apostle have us to contend for this faith? Why, earnestly; that is, not feignedly or in pretence only, but sincerely, and in good earnest; nor yet faintly, with coldness and indifference, but zealously, with warm and vigorous affections; and likewise constantly, without weariness and defection.

1. I say, we are to contend earnestly or sincerely for the faith, in opposition to all false or feigned pretences to it. There are some who make use of religion only for a cloke to cover their ambition, avarice, and other enormities; and others that plead for and pretend to the faith, merely to promote a faction and serve a party, which is not so much to contend for as against it.

2. We are to contend earnestly; that is, zealously and warmly for the faith, in opposition to all coldness and indifference about it: *It is good* (saith the Apostle) *to be zealously affected always in a good thing*; and we cannot be zealous in a better thing than in the faith of Christ. To be cool and indifferent here, is to be lukewarm and hypocritical; which instead of pleasing Christ, will provoke him to spue us out of his mouth.

3. We are to contend earnestly, that is, constantly and perseveringly for the faith unto the



end, in opposition to all weariness and apostasy: *We shall reap* (saith the Apostle) *if we faint not*; but if we flag and grow weary of our work, we shall reap nothing but the barren fruits of our own folly. We must *fight the good fight of faith*, and persist in it, before we can receive the crown; but if we let fall the combat, we may expect nothing but shame and disappointment. He that runs a race, must hold out to the end, if he mean to win the prize; and we must *keep the faith*, and continue so doing to the last, if we expect to *receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls*.

But to shew farther the manner of contending for the faith, we must know, that this is not to be done by arms; for faith being an immanent and internal act of the soul, is not to be forced by any external acts of violence; 'tis the Mahometan, not the Christian way, to preserve or propagate religion by the sword. It hath been well observed by a wise man, that religion is often lost, but never gained by rebellion, and that none fight for religion that have any: they are only the double-minded and designing men that have recourse to arms for that purpose; and our Saviour hath told us, that *they who thus use the sword, shall perish by the sword*: whereas the contending for the faith here exhorted to, is,

1. The contending for it by arguments, and the wise arts of persuasion: for the mind is wrought upon by instruction, not by compulsion; and truth enters into the soul, not by dint of arms, but by dint of argument: *Be ready* (saith St. Peter) *to give a reason of the faith and hope that is in you* \*; and we should be always

\* 1 Pet. iii. 15.

ways ready, by Scripture and reason, to convince and convert gainsayers.

2. We are to contend for the faith by earnest and fervent prayer. We cannot propagate or defend the faith by our own strength, and therefore must call in the aid of divine grace to our succour. Peter's faith had failed, if Christ had not prayed for him; and ours will fail much more without the like assistance: but though we can do nothing without him, *yet we can do all things through Christ that strengthens us; his grace will be sufficient for us*, and if he be for us, it matters not who is against us. Prayer then, which engages God of our side, is the best weapon to defend the faith; and if we rightly wield it in our contending for it, we shall not fail of success: for *the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much* \*.

Lastly, We are to contend for the faith by magnanimity and patience in sufferings; so did the Apostles and primitive Christians, who overcame all their enemies, not by fighting, but by suffering, and vanquished the greatest opposition by bearing, not by shrinking from the cross. They planted the faith by their doctrine, and watered it with their blood, and that made it to spring up into a plentiful harvest, insomuch that it now spreads over the face of the whole earth: and nothing so checks its growth or hinders its progress, as wars and commotions; for by that means what was gained by patience, will be lost by resistance, which is best prevented by a quiet and peaceable living by the rules of it. In short, *the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual, and are mighty through* X 4 *God,*

\* Jam. v. 16.



God, to the pulling down of the strong-holds of Satan, and the building us up in our most holy faith. Christ the captain of our salvation was made perfect by sufferings, and his followers the Apostles attained to perfection the same way; and if we suffer with or for him, we shall also be glorified together.

But why are we thus earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints? Why, for that the Apostle here subjoins two weighty reasons: the one is taken from the number and subtlety of those adversaries, that seek to subvert or to corrupt the faith; the other from the great danger of falling from it into unbelief.

For the 1st, The Apostle in the next words tells us, that *there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.* Where the certain men crept in are, in the parallel place of St. Peter, said to be *false prophets and false teachers*\*, who drew the people from sound doctrine, and led them into many dangerous errors: their *creeping in unawares*, is there expressed by their *privily bringing in damnable heresies*; and by St. Paul, by their *creeping into houses*, and *deceiving or leading captive the weaker sex*†, both which set forth the slyness and subtlety of their false arts to seduce the people, and to compass their evil designs. And these are here said to be *of old ordained to this condemnation*; where the word in the original is, *προγεγραμμένοι εἰς τὸ τοῦτο τὸ κρίμα*, which is badly rendered, *ordained to this condemnation*; as if they

\* 2 Pet. ii. 12;

† 2 Tim. iii. 6,

they were by a fatal decree determined to it: but the true signification is, that it was of old forewritten or prophesied of them, that they would bring this judgement upon them; and is therefore expressed by St. Peter, by their *bringing upon themselves swift destruction*. And these are described by the wickedness of their lives, and corruption of their manners; *ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness*, whose ways are contrary to the will of God, by making his goodness an encouragement to vice, and abusing his blessings by luxury and wantonness: which things they do, and allow themselves in so long, till they come to that height of wickedness, as to *deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*; that is, till they arrive at Atheism, by denying the being and providence of God; or fall into Deism, by *denying our Lord Jesus Christ*, which St. Peter expresses, by *denying the Lord that bought them*: which made the Apostle caution the Hebrews against it, saying, *Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*. And this will lead me to the

2d reason for contending earnestly for the faith, taken from the extreme danger of infidelity, or falling from the faith of Christ. To convince us whereof, the Apostle here *puts us upon remembrance of what we before knew and heard of, how that the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, and afterward destroyed them that believed not*, we might the better see the great evil and mischief of infidelity. This instance of unbelief is set forth in the 3d chapter to the Hebrews, together with



with the fore punishment that attended it; where the Apostle asking the question, *to whom God swear in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest?* answers, *to them that believed not.* Infidelity shut the gates of heaven against them, *so that they could not enter in because of unbelief.* Ver. 18, 19.

This is farther confirmed by two or three doleful examples, mentioned in the following verses of the Epistle for this day: the first whereof is that of the fallen angels, in those words, *the angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day;* meaning, those of them that apostatized from God, and fell from the faith and love of their maker, were cast out of heaven, and are bound over to the eternal torments and miseries of hell: which shews the danger of revolting from the faith, and the safety of contending for and adhering to it. The next example is that of *Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities round about,* who falling from the faith, gave themselves over to fornication; and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. A sad instance of the fatal end of all sensualities, how the flames of lust kindle the flames of God's wrath, and lead to fire everlasting, of which that material fire that consumed them was a token or sign.

Lastly, Here is farther mention made of another sort of heretics who had left the faith, stiled, *filthy dreamers, that defile the flesh.* These are supposed to be the heretics that lived in the Apostle's time, known by the name  
of

of *Gnosticks*, who were led about by vain dreams, to the abusing of themselves, and corrupting of others. They are described here by two vile and wicked practices; their despising dominions, and their speaking evil of dignities: the one relates to temporal, the other to spiritual governors.

For the first, They taught the doctrine of Christian liberty, so as to free Christians from the yoke of government; and stretched it so far, as to exempt subjects from obedience to magistrates, and servants from subjection to their masters: so that inferiors, instead of serving and honouring, were taught to turn upon and rise up against their superiors, which is what is here meant by despising dominion.

For the second, *their speaking evil of dignities*, signifies their contumelious behaviour, or setting at nought church rulers or governors: when they who are to be highly esteemed, and counted worthy of double honour for God's and Christ's sake, are vilified, ill-spoken of, and evil intreated by a profane and wicked world. These were the corrupt doctrines and practices of these heretics, and there are but too many in our days who embrace their pernicious errors, and tread in the steps of their evil examples, against whom the Saint of this day would have us to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*; which is the principal lesson taught in this general Epistle, inscribed to all Christians, who are all concerned to learn and practise it.

To draw then to a conclusion; let us all engage in this happy contention, to preserve the  
unity



unity and purity of the Christian faith, against all sin and error. There are some that would undermine the faith by schisms and divisions, and others that would corrupt it by errors and heresies; both which are great opposers of Christ's doctrine, and great obstructors of our salvation: and therefore let us contend,

1. For the unity of the faith, against all sectaries and dividers: *there is but one faith* (saith St. Paul) *and this one faith was but once delivered to the Saints.* Let us not then divide it by sects, nor multiply it by new pretences to revelation; but *stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel;* as we are exhorted, Phil. i. 27.

2. Let us contend earnestly for the purity of the faith, against all that would blend or corrupt it. Of this kind are heretics of all sorts, who seek to deprave or deny many of the articles of the Christian faith; as the doctrine of the Trinity, the satisfaction of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the like; staggering and perverting the faith of many in these things.

3. Let us contend earnestly for the continuance and propagation of the faith, against those that would subvert and undermine it. Of this sort are the Atheists, Antiscripturists, Libertines, and Free-thinkers, who would lay aside all religion, or only make it a tool to serve their other secular ends and designs.

Lastly, Let us contend earnestly for the faith, by living answerable to it, against all loose and profane professors of it, who are its greatest enemies, and do it the most mischief. In a word,

word, let us contend for it against all opposers open and secret; and then by fighting the good fight of faith, and keeping to it, we shall ere long receive a crown of glory: which God grant, for the merits of Jesus Christ.  
*Amen.*





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## On All Saints Day.

November 1st.

By Archbishop TILLOTSON.

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HEB. Chap. xiii. Ver. 7.

The latter part of the verse.

*Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*

The whole verse runs thus,

*Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*

THE great scope and design of this epistle, is to persuade the Jews, who were newly converted to Christianity, to continue stedfast in the profession of it, notwithstanding all the sufferings and persecutions it was attended withal; and to encourage them hereto, among many other arguments which the Apostle makes use of, he doth several times in this Epistle propound to them the examples and patterns of saints and holy men, that were gone before them; especially those of their own nation, who in their respective ages had given remarkable testimony of their faith in God, and constant adherence to the truth, chap. vi. 11, 12. *And we desire, that every one of you do shew the same diligence,*

*diligence, to the full assurance of hope, unto the end: that ye be not slothful; but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* And chap. xi. he gives a catalogue of the eminent heroes and saints of the Old Testament, who by faith had done such wonders, and given such testimony of their patience and constancy, in doing and suffering the will of God; from whence he infers, chap. xii. 1. that we ought to take pattern and heart from such examples, to persevere in our Christian course; *wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of martyrs, or witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; especially since they had greater examples than these, nearer to them, and more fresh in memory; the great example of our Lord, the founder of our religion; and of the first teachers of Christianity, the Disciples and Apostles of our Lord and Saviour. The example of our Lord himself, the captain and rewarder of our faith,* ver. 2. *of that xiith chap. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame. Ver. 3. For consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds.* This indeed is the great pattern of Christians, and, in regard of the great perfection of it, surpasseth all other patterns, and seems to make them useless; as having in it the perfection of the divinity, not in its full brightness, (which would be apt to dazzle rather than direct us) but allayed and shadowed with the infirmities

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firmities of human nature; and for that reason, more accommodate and familiar to us, than the divine perfections abstractedly considered.

But yet because our blessed Saviour was God as well as man, and clear of all stain of sin, (for though he was clothed with the infirmities, yet he was free from the corruption of human nature) therefore the examples of mere men, liable to sin as we are, may in many respects be more suitable and accommodate, to encourage us to the imitation of those virtues, which are attainable by us, in this state of imperfection; for which reason the Apostle hath thought fit likewise to propose to us, the highest examples of that kind, the first teachers of our religion; for of these he seems to speak here in the text, namely those Apostles, or apostolical men, by whom they had been instructed in the faith of Christ, but who were now departed this life; it being very probable, that the Apostle here speaks of such as were dead, when he says, *remember them, which have the rule over you, (or, those that have been your guides) who have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*

I say this is very probable, because he minds them to remember, which supposeth them to be absent; but especially, because he minds them, to consider the end of their conversation; by which surely he means the blessed state of those good men after death: which is elsewhere called, *the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls*\*, so likewise, Rom. vi. 22. this is said to be the end of a holy life; *ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end, everlasting life.* And it

\* 1 Pet. i. 9.

it very much favours this interpretation, that the Apostle afterward speaks of the living guides, and governors of the church, ver. 17. *Obeys them which have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls.*

So that it is highly probable, that the Apostle here speaks of such guides, and governors of the church, as had once been over them, but were now departed this life; and therefore he might with more freedom and less envy, recommend their example to them, and bid them call to mind their faith, and exemplary conversation among them, and propose it for a pattern to themselves, considering the happy end of it, viz. the blessed state they were now in, and the glorious reward they were made partakers of, in another life.

In the words thus explained, you have,

I. A duty enjoined; which is, to propose to ourselves, for our imitation, the examples of good men, that have gone before us; especially the primitive patterns of Christianity, and the first teachers of our religion. *Remember them which have been your guides, and have spoken to you the word of God; whose faith follow.*

II. The motive or encouragement to it, from the consideration of the reward of it; *considering the end of their conversation.*

I. The duty enjoined; which is, to propose to ourselves, for our imitation, the example of good men, that have gone before us; especially the primitive patterns of Christianity, and first teachers of our religion. *Remember them which have the rule over you, that have been your guides, and have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow.* In which words, the Apostle



bids them call to mind their first guides and instructors in Christianity, whom they had known, and heard, and conversed with in this world, but who now rested from their labours, and were receiving the reward of them; to remember the doctrines they had heard from them, and the virtues they had seen in them; and to embrace the one, and imitate the other.

Thus we cannot remember the primitive teachers, and patterns of Christianity, the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour; because we did not personally know them, and converse with them, living at the distance of many ages from their time: but we may do that which is equivalent, and a kind of remembrance of them; we may commemorate their faith, and the virtue and holiness of their lives; and what we hear and read of them, we may propose for patterns to ourselves, and copy them out in our lives and actions: and this is our duty, and the same in substance with theirs, who had the happiness to know, and converse with those excellent persons, to hear them preach, and to see the rules and precepts of that holy doctrine, which they taught, exemplified in their lives.

In the handling of this argument, I shall do these three things.

First, Shew why among all the examples of good men, we should more especially propose to our imitation, the primitive teachers and patterns of our religion.

Secondly, Wherein we should imitate them. The Apostle expresseth it in one word, in their faith; *whose faith follow.*

Thirdly, The encouragement to this, from the consideration of the happy state they are in,  
and

and the glorious rewards they are made partakers of; *considering the end of their conversation.*

First, I shall endeavour to shew, why among all the examples of good men, we should more especially propose to our imitation, the primitive teachers and patterns of our religion, I mean, the holy Apostles of our Lord and Saviour, *whose faith*, we should endeavour *to follow*, and to imitate the holiness and virtue of their conversation. For these certainly come nearest to that most perfect, and excellent pattern of all goodness, our blessed Saviour, and are the fairest transcripts of that unblemished original. Hence it is that St. Paul so frequently exhorts Christians to imitate his example, and the examples of the other Apostles; it being reasonable to presume, that they came nearest to the pattern of our Lord. *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample. For our conversation is in heaven\*.*

And this is reasonable, that the first in every kind should be the rule and pattern of the rest, and of all that follow after; because it is likely to be most perfect. In process of time, the best institutions are apt to decline, and by insensible degrees to swerve, and depart from the perfection of their first state; and therefore it is a good rule, to preserve things from corruption and degeneracy, often to look back to the first institution, and by that to correct those imperfections and errors which will almost unavoidably creep in with time.

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\* 1 Cor. xi. 1.

† Phil. iii. 17.



If we would preserve that purity of faith and manners, which our religion requires, we should have frequent recourse to the primitive teachers and patterns of Christianity, and endeavour to bring our belief and lives to as near a conformity with theirs, as is possible. Who so likely to deliver the faith and doctrine of Christ pure, and uncorrupted, as the primitive teachers of it, who received it from our Lord himself; and were, by an extraordinary assistance of the Holy Spirit, secured from error and mistake in the delivery of it? And who so likely to bring their lives and conversations to an exact conformity with this holy doctrine, as they, who were so thoroughly instructed in it by the best master, and shewn the practice of it in the most perfect example of holiness and virtue? Great reason there is therefore, why all Christians should follow their faith, and make their conversation more especially the pattern of their lives.

The want of a due regard to these fountains of Christian doctrine, and the first and best patterns of Christian practice, hath been the great cause of that foul degeneracy of the Romish Church, both in the doctrine and practice of Christianity. They do not follow the faith of the Apostles, the first fathers and teachers of Christianity; but of the fathers of the council of Lateran and Trent. Thus have they *forsaken the fountain of living waters*, the Holy Scriptures, *and have hewn to themselves broken cisterns, that will hold no water*; the doctrines and traditions of men. Nay, they have stopt up this *fountain of living waters* from the people, and forbid them to come to it; and forced them to drink of those impure and puddled streams,

streams, which they let out to them; and instead of the lives of the holy Apostles, and those eminent graces and virtues which shined forth in them, they represent to them the patterns of new saints; some of which neither they nor their fathers knew, and indeed never were in being; as St. Almanach, and St. Synoris, and several others; many of them so far from being saints, that they may be reckoned among the worst of men; (for instance, our countryman Thomas a Becket, who for pride and rebellion may almost vie with Lucifer himself; and yet this ill man and worst of subjects was canonized to that height, as for two hundred years together, to engross the worship of these western parts of the world, and to impoverish the shrines of all other saints, even of the Blessed Virgin herself;) others, such ideots, or hot-headed fanatics, that he that reads their lives, would take them to be fools and madmen, rather than saints (as Francis, and Dominic, and Ignatius Loyola, with several others of the same stamp) and many the very best of them, so disguised by their legends, that instead of the substantial virtues of a good life, their story is made up of false and fantastical miracles, and ridiculous freaks of superstition.

All which considered, there is great reason why we should have recourse to the primitive patterns of faith and holiness, *and be followers of them, who, we are sure, were followers of Christ.* I proceed to the

Second thing I proposed; namely, wherein we should imitate these patterns. And the Apostle expresseth it in one word, in their faith, *whose faith follow.* And the word faith is fre-



quently in the New Testament used so largely, as to comprehend the whole condition of the Gospel; a firm belief of the doctrine of it, and the fruit and effect of this belief, in a good conversation. And that faith here in the text, takes in a holy life, is evident from what follows, *whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation*; from whence it is evident, that the Apostle speaks of such a faith, as shews forth itself in a good conversation.

So that we may very well suppose the Apostle here to recommend the primitive faith to our imitation, in these four respects.

1. In regard of the sincerity and purity of it.
2. In regard of the firmness and stability of it.
3. Of their constancy and perseverance in it.
4. Of the efficacy and fruitfulness of it, in a good conversation. All these may be collected from the expressions and circumstances of the text.

1. We are to imitate these primitive patterns, in the sincerity and purity of their faith; I mean, that the faith which we profess, be the sincere doctrine of Christianity, and the pure word of God, free from all mixture of human additions and inventions; and not made up, as the faith of the Pharisees was among the Jews, and theirs of the church of Rome is at this day, of the word of God, and the doctrines and traditions of men; not like the creed of Pope Pius IV. (which is now the standard of the Roman faith) consisting of the twelve old articles of the Christian faith, delivered to us by Christ and his Apostles, and as many new ones, coined and stamp'd by their later councils. This is not *to follow the faith of the Apostles, and first pat-*  
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terns of Christianity, *the faith once delivered to the saints*, as St. Jude calls it. This is to have our faith stand upon the authority of men, and not on the word of God : whereas we are *to follow the faith of the first guides* of the Christian Church, *who spake unto them the word of God*, as the Apostle expressly chargeth here in the text.

2. We are to imitate them in the stability and firmness of our faith, and not suffer ourselves to be shaken, and removed from it, by every wind of new doctrine ; the faith of Christ being unchangeable, as Christ himself. And that by following the faith of the primitive guides and teachers of Christianity, the Apostle here means, that we should *be stedfast and unmoveable* in it, is plain from what follows immediately after the text ; *whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines : for it is a good thing, that the heart be established with grace*, that is, in the doctrine of the Gospel, which is frequently called *the grace of God*.

3. We are to imitate them, in the constancy and perseverance of their faith ; and that, notwithstanding all the discountenance and opposition, the persecution and suffering which attend the profession of this faith ; which the Apostle sufficiently intimates in this Epistle, to have been the condition of those Christians, to whom he wrote ; and therefore he proposeth so many examples to them, of constant and patient suffering for God and his truth : and it is probable enough, that the Apostle here recommends the example of those, who were the primitive martyrs, as



well as teachers of Christianity. He had before proposed to them the living examples of those, who were under actual persecutions and sufferings for the Gospel, ver. 3. *remember those that are in bonds, and those that suffer adversity*; and here in the 7th verse he seems to propose the pattern of those, who had laid down their lives and died for the faith: *remember those who have been your guides, and have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation*, τὴν ἐκβασιν τῆς ἀναστροφῆς, which may be rendered, the last act of their lives, the manner of their going out of the world, perhaps by martyrdom: as if he had said, imitate them in their constancy and perseverance in the faith, even to the last, in laying down their lives for it. And thus we should be ready to do, if God calls us to it. However, it is certain the Apostle meant their constancy and perseverance in the faith, to the last, and their dying in, if not for the faith of Christ. And this is necessary, if we expect the crown of life, and hope for the same happy end, which they had; for none but *they that continue to the end, shall be saved*.

4. We should imitate them, in the efficacy and fruitfulness of their faith, in the practice and virtues of a good life. *Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation*, that is, their perseverance in a holy course to the end. And these must never be separated; a sound faith, and a good life. Without this, our faith is barren and dead, as St. James tells us, ch. ii. ver. 17. Our knowledge and belief of the Christian doctrine must manifest itself in a good conversation. *Who is a wise man* (says the same St.

St. James, ch. iii. ver. 13.) *who is a wise man, and endowed with knowledge amongst you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works. This is a faithful saying, saith St. Paul to Titus, ch. iii. 8. And these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God, be careful to maintain good works.*

And herein the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour were eminent examples. They lived as they taught, and practised the doctrine which they preached. So St. Paul strictly chargeth Timothy. *Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity\**. And our Saviour tells us, that hereby chiefly false prophets and teachers might be known from the true Apostles of Christ. *By their fruits ye shall know them†*. And indeed we do not follow the faith of those excellent persons, if we do not *abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which, by Jesus Christ, are to the praise and glory of God*. I come now to the

Third and last thing I proposed, viz. the encouragement to this, from the consideration of the happy state of those persons, who are proposed to us for patterns, and the glorious reward which they are made partakers of in another world. Considering the end of their conversation, τὴν ἐκβασιν, their egress or departure out of this life, into a blessed and glorious state, where they have received the crown and reward of their faith and patience, and pious conversation in this world: or else (which comes much to one) considering the conclusion of their lives, with what patience and comfort they left the world, and with what joyful assurance of the  
happy

\* 1 Tim. iv. 12.

† Matth. vii. 20.



happy condition they were going to, and were to continue in for ever.

And this is a great encouragement to constancy and perseverance in faith and holiness, to see with what chearfulness and comfort good men die, and with what a firm and steady persuasion of the happiness they are entering upon. For who would not be glad to leave the world, in that calmness and serenity of mind, and comfortable assurance of a blessed eternity? Bad men wish this, and are ready to say with Balaam, *let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.* But if we would have the comfort of such a death, we must live such lives, and imitate the faith and good conversation of those whom we desire to resemble in the manner of their death, and to go into the same happy state that they are in after death. If we do not make their lives our pattern, we must not expect to be conformable to them in the happy manner of their death. When we hear of the death of an eminently good man, we do not doubt but he is happy; and are confident, that he will meet with a reward of his piety and goodness in another world. If we believe this of him, let us endeavour to be like him; that we may attain the same happiness, which we believe him to be possessed of, and, as the Apostle exhorts, chap. vi. 12. *Let us not be slothful; but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* Let us shew the same diligence that they did; that we may have the same full assurance of hope unto the end, which they had.

The inference from this discourse, which I have made upon this argument, is, to shew what

what use we ought to make of these excellent examples, which are set before us, of the first founders and teachers of our religion, and what is the proper honour and respect which we ought to pay to their memory: not invocation and adoration; but a zealous imitation of their faith, and good conversation. The greatest honour we can do them, the most acceptable to God, the most grateful to them, and the most beneficial to ourselves, is to endeavour to be like them: not to make any images, and likenesses of them, to fall down before them, and worship them; but to form the image of their faith and virtues upon our hearts and lives: not to pray to them; but to praise God for such bright and glorious examples, and to endeavour with all our might to imitate their faith, and patience, and piety, and humility, and meekness, and charity, and all those other virtues which were so resplendent in them. And this is to remember the founders of our religion as we ought, *to follow their faith, and to consider the end of their conversation.*

Had the Christian religion required, or intended any such thing, as of latter times hath been practised in the world; it had been as easy for the Apostle to have said, remember them that have been your guides, and have spoken to you the word of God, to erect images to them, and to worship them with due veneration, and to pray to them and make use of their intercession. But no such thing is said, or the least intimation given of it, either in this text, or any other in the whole Bible; but very much to the contrary.

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Their example indeed is frequently recommended to us, for our imitation and encouragement; and for this reason, the providence of God hath taken particular care, that the memory of the Apostles, and so many primitive Christians and martyrs, should be transmitted to posterity; that Christians in all succeeding ages might propound these patterns to themselves, and have perpetually before their eyes the piety and virtue of their lives, and their patient and constant sufferings for the truth: that when God shall please to call us to the like trial, *we may not be wearied and faint in our minds; but being compassed about with such a cloud of witnesses,* having so many examples in our eye of those, *who through faith and patience inherit the promises,* and do now as it were look down from their happy state upon us here below, who are combating with manifold temptations, to see how we behave and acquit ourselves in our Christian course; we may take encouragement to ourselves, from such examples, and such spectators, *to run with patience the race which is set before us.*

I know indeed that other use than this hath been, and is at this day made of the memory of the saints and martyrs of former ages, very dishonourable to God, and very grievous to them, if they be sensible of what is done here below; I mean to worship them, and to pray to them, and (to the great disparagement of the powerful intercession of *our great high priest, Jesus the Son of God*) to make them the mediators and intercessors in heaven with God for us. Of this the Scripture hath no where given us the least intima-

intimation ; but hath exprefly commanded the contrary, *to worship the Lord our God, and him only to serve ; and to pray to him alone, in the name of Jesus Christ, who is the only mediator betwixt God and man.* Nor are there any footsteps of any fuch practice, in the primitive church, for the first three hundred years ; as is acknowledged by our most learned adversaries of the church of Rome.

The Scripture no where propounds the faints to us for objects of our worship ; but for the patterns of our lives. This is the greatest respect and veneration, that we can, or ought to pay to them ; and whatever is beyond this, is a voluntary humility, injurious to God and our blessed Saviour, and most certainly displeasing to those, whom we pretend to honour ; if they know how men play the fool about them here below.

Let us then endeavour to be like them, in the holy and virtuous actions of their lives, in their constant patience and suffering for the truth ; if God shall call us thereto. And we may be like them, if we do but sincerely endeavour it, and pray to God for his grace and assistance to that end. For these examples were not left for our admiration only ; but for our imitation. We frequently read the lives of the Apostles and first founders of our religion : but I know not how it comes to pass, we choose rather lazily to admire them, than vigorously to follow them ; as if the piety of the first Christians were miraculous, and not at all intended for the imitation of succeeding ages ; as if heaven and earth, God and men, and all things were altered, since that time ; as if Christianity were then in its youthful  
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age and vigour, but is since decayed, and grown old, and hath quite lost its power and virtue. And indeed the generality of Christians live at such a faint and careless rate, as to make the world believe, that either all the stories of the primitive Christians are fables; or else, that the force of Christianity is strangely abated, and that the Holy Spirit of God hath forsaken the earth, and is retired to the Father. But truth never grows old, and those laws of goodness and righteousness, which are contained in the Gospel, are still as reasonable, and apt to gain upon the minds of men, as ever. God is the same he was, and our blessed Saviour is still at the right hand of God, interceding powerfully for sinners, for *mercy and grace to help in time of need*. The promises and threatnings of the Gospel are still as true and powerful as ever; and the Holy Spirit of God is still in the world, and effectually works in them that believe.

Let us not then deceive ourselves in this matter. The primitive Christians were *men like ourselves, subject to the same passions that we are, and compassed about with the same infirmities*; so that although that extraordinary spirit and power of miracles, which God endowed them withal, for the first planting and propagating of the Gospel in the world, be now ceased; yet the sanctifying power and virtue of God's Holy Spirit does still accompany the Gospel, and is ready to assist us in every good work.

In a word, we have all that is necessary to work the same graces and virtues in us, which were in them; and if we be not slothful, and wanting to ourselves, we may *follow their faith,*

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and at last *attain the end of it, even the salvation of our souls.*

Let us then, from an idle admiring of those excellent patterns, proceed to a vigorous imitation of them, and be so far from being discouraged by the excellency of them, as to make even that, matter and ground of encouragement to ourselves; according to that of Tertullian, *admonetur omnis ætas fieri posse, quod aliquando factum est*; “all ages to the end of the world may be convinced, that what hath been done, is possible to be done.” There have been such holy and excellent persons in the world; and therefore it is possible for men to be such.

*Let us not then be slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Since we are compassed about with such a cloud of witnesses; let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us, and let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God. Amen.*



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On the Anniversary of the Gun-  
powder Plot.

November 5th.

Preached before the House of Commons, 1678.

By Archbishop TILLOTSON.

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LUKE, Chap. ix. Ver. 55, 56.

*But he turned and rebuked them, and said, ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them.*

**A**MONG many other things, which may justly recommend the Christian religion to the approbation of mankind, the intrinsic goodness of it is most apt to make impresson upon the minds of serious and considerate men. The miracles of it are the great external evidence and confirmation of its truth and divinity; but the morality of its doctrines and precepts, so agreeable to the best reason and wisest apprehensions of mankind, so admirably fitted for the perfecting of our natures, and the sweetening of the spirits and tempers of men, so friendly to human society, and every way so well calculated for the peace and order of the world: these are the things which our religion glories in, as her crown and excellency. Miracles are apt to awaken and astonish, and by a sensible and overpowering

powering evidence to bear down the prejudices of infidelity; but there are secret charms in goodness, which take fast hold of the hearts of men, and do insensibly, but effectually, command our love and esteem.

And surely nothing can be more proper to the occasion of this day, than a discourse upon this argument: which so directly tends to correct that unchristian spirit, and mistaken zeal, which hath been the cause of all our troubles and confusions, and had so powerful an influence upon that horrid tragedy which was designed, to have been acted as upon this day.

And that we may the better understand the reason of our Saviour's reproof here in the text, it will be requisite to consider the occasion of this hot and furious zeal which appeared in some of his disciples. And that was this: our Saviour was going from Galilee to Jerusalem, and being to pass through a village of Samaria, he sent messengers before him to prepare entertainment for him; but the people of that place would not receive him, because he was going to Jerusalem: the reason whereof was, the difference of religion which then was between the Jews and the Samaritans. Of which I shall give you this brief account.

The Samaritans were originally that colony of the Assyrians, which we find in the book of Kings was, upon the captivity of the ten tribes, planted in Samaria by Salmanasser. They were heathens, and worshipped their own idols, till they were so infested with lions, that for the redress of this mischief they desired to be instructed in the worship of the God of Israel,



hoping by this means to appease the anger of the god of the country ; and then they worshipped the God of Israel together with their own idols ; for so it is said in the history of the Kings, *that they feared the Lord, and served their own gods.*

After the tribe of Judah were returned from the captivity of Babylon, and the temple of Jerusalem was rebuilt, all the Jews were obliged by a solemn covenant to put away their heathen wives. It happened that Manasses, a Jewish priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Samaritan ; and being unwilling to put away his wife, Sanballat excited the Samaritans to build a temple upon mount Gerizim near the city of Samaria, in opposition to the temple at Jerusalem, and made Manasses his son-in-law priest there.

Upon the building of this new temple there arose a great feud between the Jews and Samaritans, which in process of time grew to so violent a hatred, that they would not so much as shew common civility to one another. And this was the reason why the Samaritans would not receive our Saviour on his journey, because they perceived he was going to worship at Jerusalem.

At this uncivil usage of our Saviour, two of his disciples, James and John, presently take fire, and out of a well-meaning zeal for the honour of their master, and of the true God, and of Jerusalem the true place of his worship, they are immediately for dispatching out of the way these enemies of God, and Christ, and the true religion ; these heretics and schismatics, for so they called one another. And to this end they desire our Saviour to give them power to *call for fire from*

*from heaven to consume them, as Elias had done in a like case, and that too not far from Samaria; and it is not improbable that their being so near the place where Elias had done the like before, might prompt them to this request.*

Our Saviour seeing them in this heat, notwithstanding all the reasons they pretended for their passion, and for all they sheltered themselves under the great example of Elias, doth very calmly but severely reprove this temper of theirs, *ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of: for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.*

Grotius observes, that these two excellent sentences are left out in a manuscript that is in England. I cannot tell what manuscript he refers to; but if it were a copy written out in the height of popery, no wonder if some zealous transcriber, offended at this passage, struck it out of the Gospel, being confident our Saviour would not say any thing that was so directly contrary to the current doctrine and practice of those times. But thanks be to God, this admirable saying is still preserved, and can never be made use of upon a fitter occasion.

*Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of:* that is, ye own yourselves to be my disciples, but do you consider what spirit now acts and governs you? Not that surely which my doctrine designs to mould and fashion you into, which is not a furious and persecuting and destructive spirit, but mild and gentle and saving; tender of the lives and interests of men, even of those who are our greatest enemies: you ought to consider, that you are not now under the rough and sour dispensation of the law, but the calm and



peaceable institution of the Gospel ; to which the spirit of Elias, though he was a very good man in his time, would be altogether unsuitable. God permitted it then, under that imperfect way of religion, but now under the Gospel it would be intolerable : for that designs universal love, and peace, and good will : and now no difference of religion, no pretence of zeal for God and Christ can warrant and justify this passionate and fierce, this vindictive and exterminating spirit.

*For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* He says indeed elsewhere, that he *was not come to send peace, but a sword* ; which we are not to understand of the natural tendency of his religion, but of the accidental event and effect of it, through the malice and perverseness of men : but here he speaks of the proper intention and design of his coming : he came not to kill and destroy, but *for the healing of the nations* ; for the salvation and redemption of mankind, not only *from the wrath to come*, but from a great part of the evils and miseries of this life : he came to discountenance all fierceness, and rage, and cruelty in men, one toward another ; to restrain and subdue that furious and unpeaceable spirit, which is so troublesome to the world, and the cause of so many mischiefs and disorders in it : and to introduce a religion, which consults not only the eternal salvation of men's souls, but their temporal peace and security, their comfort and happiness in this world.

The words thus explained contain this observation, *that a revengeful and cruel and destructive spirit, is directly contrary to the design*  
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*and temper of the Gospel, and not to be excused upon any pretence of zeal for God and religion.*

In the prosecution of this argument, I shall confine my discourse to these three heads.

First, to shew the opposition of this spirit to the true spirit and design of the Christian religion.

Secondly, the unjustifiableness of it upon any pretence of zeal for God and religion.

Thirdly, to apply this discourse to the occasion of this day.

First, I shall shew the opposition of this spirit to the true spirit and design of the Christian religion: that it is directly opposite to the main and fundamental precepts of the Gospel, and to the great patterns and examples of our religion, our blessed Saviour, and the primitive Christians.

1. This spirit which our Saviour here reproves in his disciples, is directly opposite to the main and fundamental precepts of the Gospel; which command us to *love one another, and to love all men*, even our very enemies; and are so far from permitting us to persecute those who hate us, that they forbid us to hate those who persecute us: they require us to be *merciful as our Father which is in heaven is merciful*; to be *kind and tender-hearted, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us*; and to *put on as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, meekness and long suffering, and to follow peace with all men, and to shew all meekness to all men*; and particularly the pastors and governors of the church are especially charged to be of this temper, *the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men*;



*apt to teach, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.* To all which precepts, and many more that I might reckon up, nothing can be more plainly opposite than inhuman cruelties and persecutions, treacherous conspiracies and bloody massacres, a barbarous inquisition, and a holy league to extirpate all that differ from us. And instead of *instructing in meekness those that oppose themselves*, to convert men with fire and faggot, and to teach them as Gideon did the men of Succoth with briars and thorns; and instead of waiting for their repentance, and endeavouring to recover them out of the snare of the devil, to put them quick into his hands, and to dispatch them to hell as fast as is possible. If the precepts of Christianity can be contradicted, surely it cannot be done more grossly and palpably than by such practices.

2. This spirit is likewise directly opposite to the great patterns and examples of our religion, our blessed Saviour, and the primitive Christians. It was prophesied of our Saviour that he should be the prince of peace, and should make it one of his great businesses upon earth, to make peace in heaven and earth, to reconcile men to God and to one another, to take up all those feuds, and to extinguish all those animosities that were in the world; to bring to an agreement and a peaceable demeanour one toward another those that were most distant in their tempers and interests; to *make the lamb and the wolf lie down together, that there might be no more destroying nor devouring in all God's holy mountain*; that is, that that cruel and destructive spirit, which prevailed

vailed before in the world, should then be banished out of all Christian societies.

And in conformity to these predictions, when our Saviour was born into the world, the angels sang that heavenly anthem, *glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will among men.* And when he appeared in the world, his whole life and carriage was gentle and peaceable, full of meekness and charity. His great business was to be beneficial to others, to seek and to save that which was lost; *he went about doing good,* to the bodies and to the souls of men: his miracles were not destructive to mankind, but healing and charitable. He could, if he had pleased, by his miraculous power have confounded his enemies, and have thundered out death and destruction against the infidel world, as his pretended vicar hath since done against heretics. But intending that his religion should be propagated in human ways, and that men should be drawn to the profession of it by the bands of love, and the cords of a man, by the gentle and peaceable methods of reason and persuasion; he gave no example of a furious zeal and religious rage against those who despised his doctrine. It was propounded to men for their great advantage, and they rejected it at their utmost peril. It seemed good to the author of this institution to compel no man to it by temporal punishments. When he went about making profelytes, he offered violence to no man, only said, *If any man will be my disciple, if any man will come after me.* And when his disciples were leaving him, he does not set up an inquisition to torture and punish them for their de-

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fection from the faith, only says, *will ye also go away?*

And, in imitation of this blessed pattern, the Christian Church continued to speak and act for several ages. And this was the language of the holy fathers, *Lex nova non se vindicat ultore gladio, the Christian law doth not avenge itself by the sword.* This was then the stile of councils, *Nemini ad credendum vim inferre, to offer violence to no man to compel him to the faith.* I proceed in the

II. Second place, to shew the unjustifiableness of this spirit upon any pretence whatsoever of zeal for God and religion. No case can be put with circumstances of greater advantage, and more likely to justify this spirit and temper, than the case here in the text. Those against whom the disciples would have called for fire from heaven, were heretics and schismatics from the true church; they had affronted our Saviour himself in his own person; the honour of God, and of that religion which he had set up in the world, and of Jerusalem which he had appointed for the place of his worship, were all concerned in this case: so that if ever it were warrantable to put on this fierce and furious zeal, here was a case that seemed to require it: but even in these circumstances our Saviour thinks fit to rebuke and discountenance this spirit, *ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.* And he gives such a reason as ought in all differences of religion, how wide soever they be, to deter men from this temper, *for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them;* that is, this spirit is utterly inconsistent with

with the great design of Christian religion, and the end of our Saviour's coming into the world.

And now, what hath the church of Rome to plead for her cruelty to men for the cause of religion, which the disciples might not much better have pleaded for themselves in their case? What hath she to say against those who are the objects of her cruelty and persecution, which would not have held against the Samaritans? Does she practise these severities out of a zeal for truth, and for the honour of God, and Christ, and the true religion? Why, upon these very accounts it was, that the disciples would have called for fire from heaven to have destroyed the Samaritans. Is the church of Rome persuaded that those whom she persecutes are heretics and schismatics, and that no punishment can be too great for such offenders? So the disciples were persuaded of the Samaritans; and upon much better grounds: only the disciples had some excuse in their case, which the church of Rome had not; and that was ignorance: and this apology our Saviour makes for them, *ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of*: they had been bred up in the Jewish religion, which gave some indulgence to this kind of temper, and they were able to cite a great example for themselves; beside, they were then but learners and not thoroughly instructed in the Christian doctrine. But in the church of Rome, whatever the case of particular persons may be, as to the whole church and the governing part of it, this ignorance is wilful and affected, and therefore inexcusable. For the Christian religion, which they profess to embrace, does as plainly teach the contrary, as it does any other matter whatsoever:



soever: and it is not more evident in the New Testament that Christ died for sinners, than that Christians should not kill one another, for the misbelief of any article of revealed religion; much less for the disbelief of such articles as are invented by men, and imposed as the doctrines of Christ.

You have heard what kind of spirit it is, which our Saviour here reproves in his disciples. It was a furious and destructive spirit, contrary to Christian charity and goodness. But yet this may be said in mitigation of their fault, that they themselves offered no violence to their enemies: they left it to God, and no doubt would have been very glad that he would have manifested his severity upon them, by sending down *fire from heaven* to have consumed them.

But there is a much worse spirit than this in the world, which is not only contrary to Christianity, but to the common principles of natural religion, and even to humanity itself; which by falsehood and perfidiousness, by secret plots and conspiracies, or by open sedition and rebellion, by an inquisition or massacre, by deposing and killing kings, by fire and sword, by the ruin of their country, and betraying it into the hands of foreigners: and in a word, by dissolving all the bonds of human society, and subverting the peace and order of the world, that is, by all the wicked ways imaginable, doth incite men both to promote and to advance their religion. As if all the world were made for them, and there were not only no other Christians, but no other men beside themselves; as Babylon of old proudly vaunted, *I am, and there is none beside me*: and as if the God, whom the Christians worship,

worship, were not *the God of order but of confusion*; as if he whom we call *the Father of mercies*, were delighted with cruelty, and could not have a more pleasing sacrifice offered to him than a massacre, nor put a greater honour upon his priests, than to make them judges of an inquisition, that is, the inventors and decreers of torments for men more righteous and innocent than themselves.

Thus to misrepresent God and religion, is to divest them of all their majesty and glory. For if that of Seneca be true, that *sine bonitate nulla majestas*, 'without goodness there can be no such thing as majesty,' then to separate goodness and mercy from God, compassion and charity from religion, is to make the two best things in the world, God and religion, good for nothing.

How much righter apprehensions had the heathens of the divine nature, which they looked upon as so benign and beneficial to mankind, that (as Tully admirably says) *Dii immortales ad usum hominum fabrefacti penè videantur*, 'the nature of the immortal gods may almost seem to be exactly framed for the benefit and advantage of men.' And as for religion, they always spake of it as of the great band of human society, and the foundation of truth and fidelity, and justice among men. But when religion once comes to supplant moral righteousness, and to teach men the absurdest things in the world, *to lie for the truth, and to kill men for God's sake*: when it serves to no other purpose, but to be a bond of conspiracy, to inflame the tempers of men to a greater fierceness, and to set a keener edge upon their spirits, and to make them *ten times more the children of wrath and cruelty than they*



*they were by nature*, then surely it loses its nature, and ceases to be religion: for let any man say worse of atheism and infidelity, if he can. And, for God's sake, what is religion good for, but to reform the manners and dispositions of men, to restrain human nature from violence and cruelty, from falshood and treachery, from sedition and rebellion? Better it were there were no revealed religion, and that human nature were left to the conduct of its own principles and inclinations, which are much more mild and merciful, much more for the peace and happiness of human society; than to be acted by a religion that inspires men with so wild a fury, and prompts them to commit such outrages: that is continually supplanting government, and undermining the welfare of mankind: in short, such a religion as teaches men to propagate and advance itself by means so evidently contrary to the very nature and end of all religion!

And this, if it be well considered, will appear to be a very convincing way of reasoning; by shewing the last result and consequence of such principles, and of such a train of propositions, to be a most gross and palpable absurdity. For example, we will at present admit popery to be the true religion, and their doctrines of extirpating heretics, of the lawfulness of deposing kings, and subverting government by all the cruel and wicked ways that can be thought of, to be, as in truth they are, the doctrines of this religion: in this case, I would not trouble myself to debate particulars: but if in the gross, and upon the whole matter it be evident that such a religion as this is as bad or worse than infidelity and no religion, this is conviction enough

enough to a wise man, and as good as a demonstration, that this is not the true religion, and that it cannot be from God.

How much better teachers of religion were the old heathen philosophers? In all whose books and writings there is not one principle to be found of treachery or rebellion : nothing that gives the least countenance to an assassination or a massacre, to the betraying of one's native country, or the cutting of his neighbour's throat for difference in opinion. I speak it with grief and shame, because the credit in our common Christianity is somewhat concerned in it, that Panætius and Antipater and Diogenes the Stoic, Tully and Plutarch and Seneca, were much honefter and more Christian casuists than the Jesuits are, or the generality of the casuists of any other order, that I know of, in the church of Rome. I come now in the

III. Third and last place, to make some application of this discourse.

1. Let not religion suffer for those faults and miscarriages which really proceed from the ignorance of religion, and from the want of it. That under colour and pretence of religion, very bad things are done, is no argument that religion itself is not good : because the best things are liable to be perverted and abused to very ill purposes, nay the corruption of them is commonly the worst ; as, they say, the richest and noblest wines make the sharpest vinegar. *If the light that is in you, saith our Saviour, be darkness, how great is that darkness?*

2. Let us beware of that church which countenanceth this unchristian spirit here condemned by our Saviour ; and which teaches us such doctrines,



trines, and warrants such practices as are consonant thereto. You all know, without my saying so, that I mean the church of Rome; in which are taught such doctrines as these, that heretics, that is, all who differ from them in matters of faith, are to be extirpated by fire and sword; which was decreed in the third and fourth Lateran councils, where all Christians are strictly charged to endeavour this to the uttermost of their power, *sicut reputari cupiunt & haberi fideles*, 'as they desire to be esteemed and accounted Christians.' Next their doctrines of deposing kings, and of absolving their subjects from obedience to them; which are not only universally believed, but practised by the popes and Roman church for several ages. Indeed this doctrine hath not been at all times alike frankly and openly avowed, but it is undoubtedly theirs; and hath frequently been put in execution, though they have not thought it so convenient at all turns to make profession of it. It is a certain kind of engine, which is to be screwed up or let down as occasion serves; and is commonly kept like Goliath's sword in the sanctuary behind the ephod, but yet so that the high-priest can lend it out upon an extraordinary occasion.

And for practices consonant to these doctrines, I shall go no farther than the horrid and bloody design of this day. Such a mystery of iniquity, as had been hid from ages and generations; such a master-piece of villainy, as eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor ever before entered into the heart of man: so prodigiously barbarous, both in the substance and circumstances of it, as is not to be paralleled in all

the voluminous records of time, from the foundation of the world.

Of late years our adversaries (for so they have made themselves without any provocation of ours) have almost had the impudence to deny so plain a matter of fact; but I wish they have not taken an effectual course by fresh conspiracies, of equal or greater horror, to confirm the belief of it with a witness. But I shall not anticipate what will be more proper for another day, but confine myself to the present occasion.

I will not trouble you with the particular narrative of this dark conspiracy, nor the obscure manner of its discovery, which Bellarmine himself acknowledges not to have been without a miracle. Let us thank God that it was so happily discovered and disappointed, as I hope their present designs will be by the same wonderful and merciful providence of God toward a most unworthy people. And may the lameness and halting of Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, never depart from that order, but be a fate continually attending all their villainous plots and contrivances.

I shall only observe to you, that after the discovery of this plot, the authors of it were not convinced of the evil, but sorry for the miscarriage of it. Sir Everard Digby, whose very original papers and letters are now in my hands, after he was in prison, and knew he must suffer, calls it the best cause; and was extremely troubled to hear it censured by catholics and priests, contrary to his expectation, for a great sin: *let me tell you, says he, what a grief it is to hear that so much condemned, which I did believe would have been otherwise thought of by catholics.* And



And yet he concludes that letter with these words: *in how full joy should I die, if I could do any thing for the cause which I love more than my life!* And in another letter he says, he could have said something to have mitigated the odium of this business, as to that point of involving those of his own religion in the common ruin: *I dare not (says he) take that course that I could, to make it appear less odious, for divers were to have been brought out of danger, who now would rather hurt them otherwise. I do not think there would have been three worth the saving, that should have been lost.* And as to the rest, that were to have been swallowed up in that destruction, he seems not to have the least relenting in his mind about them. All doubts he seems to have looked upon as temptations, and intreats his friends *to pray for the pardoning of his not sufficient striving against temptations since this business was undertaken.*

Good God! that any thing that is called religion, should so perfectly strip men of all humanity, and transform the mild and gentle race of mankind into such wolves and tigers: that ever a pretended zeal for thy glory should instigate men to dishonour thee at such a rate! It is believed by many, and not without cause, that the pope and his faction are the anti-christ. I will say no more than I know in this matter; I am not so sure that it is he that is particularly designed in Scripture by that name, as I am of the main articles of the Christian faith: but however that be, I challenge anti-christ himself, whoever he be, and whenever he comes, to do worse and wickeder things than these.

But

But I must remember my text, and take heed of imitating that spirit which is there condemned, whilst I am inveighing against it. And in truth it almost looks uncharitably to speak the truth in these matters, and barely to relate what these men have not blushed to do. I need not, nay I cannot, aggravate these things; they are too horrible in themselves, even when they are expressed in the softest and gentlest words.

I would not be understood to charge every particular person who is, or hath been in the Roman communion, with the guilt of these or the like practices: But I must charge their doctrines and principles with them: I must charge the heads of their church, and the prevalent teaching and governing part of it, who are usually the contrivers and abettors, the executioners and applauders, of these cursed designs.

I do willingly acknowledge the great piety and charity of several persons who have lived and died in that communion, as Erasmus, father Paul, Thuanus, and many others; who had in truth more goodness than the principles of that religion do either incline men to, or allow of. And yet he that considers how universally almost the papists in Ireland were engaged in that massacre, which is still fresh in our memories, will find it very hard to determine how many degrees of innocence and good-nature, or of coldness and indifferency in religion, are necessary to overbalance the fury of a blind zeal and a misguided conscience.

I doubt not but papists are made like other men. Nature hath not generally given them such savage and cruel dispositions, but their re-



ligion hath made them so. Whereas true Christianity is not only the best, but the best-natured institution in the world; and so far as any church is departed from good-nature, and become cruel and barbarous, so far is it degenerated from Christianity. I am loth to say it, and yet I am confident it is very true, that many papists would have been excellent persons, and very good men, if their religion had not hindered them; if the doctrines and principles of their church had not perverted and spoiled their natural dispositions.

I speak not this to exasperate you, worthy patriots and the great bulwark of our religion, to any unreasonable or unnecessary, much less unchristian severities against them: no, let us not do like them; let us never do any thing for religion that is contrary to it: but I speak it to awaken your care thus far, that if their priests will always be putting these pernicious principles into the minds of the people, effectual provision may be made, that it may never be in their power again to put them in practice. We have found by experience, that ever since the Reformation they have been continually pecking at the foundations of our peace and religion: when God knows we have been so far from thirsting after their blood, that we did not so much as desire their disquiet but in order to our own necessary safety, and indeed to theirs.

And God be praised for those matchless instances which we are able to give of the generous humanity and Christian temper of the English protestants. After Queen Mary's death, when the protestant religion was restored, Bishop Bonner, notwithstanding all his cruelties and butcheries,

cheries, was permitted quietly to live and die amongst us. And after the treason of this day, nay at this very time, since the discovery of so barbarous a design, and the highest provocation in the world, by the treacherous murder of one of his majesty's justices of the peace, a very good man and a most excellent magistrate, who had been active in the discovery of this plot; I say, after all this, and notwithstanding the continued and insupportable insolence of their carriage and behaviour, even upon this occasion, no violence, nay not so much as any incivility, that I ever heard of, hath been offered to any of them. I would to God they would but seriously consider this one difference between our religion and theirs, and which of them comes nearest to the wisdom which is from above, which is peaceable, and gentle, and full of mercy. And I do heartily pray, and have good hopes, that upon this occasion God will open their eyes so far, as to convince a great many among them, that that cannot be the true religion which inspires men with such barbarous minds.

I have now done; and if I have been transported upon this argument somewhat beyond my usual temper, the occasion of this day, and our present circumstances will, I hope, bear me out. I have expressed myself all along with a just sense, and with no unjust severity, concerning these horrid principles and practices; but yet with great pity and tenderness toward those miserably seduced souls, who have been deluded by them, and ensnared in them. And I can truly say, as the Roman orator did of himself upon another occasion, *Me natura misericordem, patria severum, crudelem nec patria nec natura*



*esse voluit.* My nature inclines me to be tender and compaffionate; a hearty zeal for our religion, and concernment for the publick welfare of my country, may perhaps have made me a little fevere; but neither my natural difpofition, nor the temper of the Englifh nation, nor the genius of the proteftant, that is, the true Chriftian religion, will allow me to be cruel.

For the future, let us *encourage ourfelves in the Lord our God*; and commit our caufe, and *the keeping of our fouls to him in well doing*: And, under God, let us leave it to the wifdom and care of his majesty, and his two houfes of parliament, to make a lafting provifion for the fecurity of our peace and religion, againft all the fecret contrivances and open attempts of *theſe ſons of violence*. And let us remember thoſe words of David, *The wicked plotteth againſt the juſt, and gnaweth upon him with his teeth: The Lord ſhall laugh at him, for he ſeeth that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the ſword, and bent their bow, to caſt down the poor and needy, and to ſlay ſuch as be of upright converſation: Their ſwords ſhall enter into their own heart, and their bows ſhall be broken\**.

And I hope, conſidering what God hath heretofore done, and hath now begun to do for us, we may take encouragement to ourſelves againſt all the enemies of our religion, which are confederated againſt us, in the words of the prophet: *Aſſociate yourſelves, O ye people, and ye ſhall be broken in pieces, and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourſelves, and ye ſhall be broken in pieces: take counſel together, and it ſhall come*

\* Pſal. xxxvii. 12, 13, 14, 15.

*to nought: speak the word and it shall not stand.  
For God is with us\*.*

And now what remains, but to make our most devout and thankful acknowledgments to Almighty God, for the invaluable blessing of our reformed religion, and for the miraculous deliverance of this day, and for the wonderful discovery of the late horrid and barbarous conspiracy against our prince, our peace, and our religion.

To him therefore, our most gracious and merciful God, our shield, and our rock, and our mighty deliverer: who hath brought us out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage; and hath set us free from popish tyranny and superstition, a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear:

Who hath, from time to time, delivered us from the bloody and merciless designs of wicked and unreasonable men; and hath rendered all the plots, and contrivances, the mischievous counsels and devices of these worse than heathens, of none effect:

Who did, as upon this day, rescue our king and our princes, our nobles and the heads of our tribes, the governors of our church, and the judges of the land, from that fearful destruction which was ready to have swallowed them up:

Who still brings to light the hidden things of darkness, and hath hitherto preserved our religion and civil interests to us, in despite of all the malicious and restless attempts of our adversaries;

\* Isa. viii. 9, 10.



Unto that great God, who hath done so great things for us, and hath saved us by a mighty salvation: who hath delivered us, and doth deliver us, and, we trust, will still deliver us: be glory and honour, thanksgiving and praise, from generation to generation. And let all the people say, *Amen.*



## On Advent Sunday.

By Bishop ATTERBURY.

St. MATTH. Chap. xi. Ver. 3.

*Art thou he that should come? or do we look for another?*

**A**T this time of Advent, particularly dedicated by the church to a devout commemoration of our Saviour's *coming in the flesh*, and set apart to prepare us for a worthy celebration of the approaching feast of his nativity; it may be no unsuitable entertainment to your thoughts, to suggest to you some reflections on this passage of Scripture, and those others which introduce, accompany, and explain it.

*When John had heard in prison (says the Evangelist) the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come? or do we look for another? That is, Art thou the Messiah, the great Redeemer of Israel, whose coming was foretold by the Prophets, and is now expected with great impatience by the whole body of the Jews, and before whom I am sent, as his forerunner and harbinger? Jesus answered, and said unto them, Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the*  
Aa 4
deaf



*deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me!* As if he had said, Judge ye yourselves, by the works which I now perform, whether I am the Messiah or not, or what reason there can be to doubt of my divine mission and authority.

This transaction is extremely remarkable, and will afford much useful matter to our reflections, in relation both to the enquiry made by the Baptist, and the answer returned by our Lord to that enquiry.

And first, as to the enquiry itself, it may be matter of just surprize to us, that the Baptist should, so long after he had continued discharging the office of Christ's Harbinger, put such a question as this to our Saviour, *Art thou he that should come? or do we look for another?* For could John be ignorant of our Saviour's character? Could he entertain the least doubt of it? He, who had formerly baptized Christ, had seen the Spirit descend on him in the form of a dove, and heard the voice from heaven thus testifying concerning him, *This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?* He, who had borne record of our Lord more than once, that he was *the Son of God, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world\**? Could he possibly afterward be under any degree of hesitancy or doubt, in relation to our Saviour's character? Certainly he could not; and therefore we must look out for some other reason of his sending this message, beside the desire of satisfying himself: and that plainly was the procuring satisfaction to those by whom the

\* Joh. i. xxxiv. 29.

message was sent, his disciples and followers, who, notwithstanding all the asseverations of John to this purpose, continued still incredulous;—we may suppose, for these reasons :

1. Because they saw their master imprisoned, and now likely to be put to death, for preaching up the kingdom of God, and the coming of the Messiah ; and could not apprehend, that, had Jesus been that Messiah, he should have wanted power or will to employ that power for the Baptist's deliverance. And yet so far was this from being the case, that our Saviour doth not appear once to have made an honourable mention of John, till after the disciples, who came upon this errand, had left him. Then indeed, and not before, the Evangelist tells us, *Jesus began to say unto the multitudes, what went ye out into the wilderness to see?* and to take that occasion of enlarging on the Baptist's character, and the dignity of his office.

2. They might have observed, that our Saviour had not himself hitherto asserted his right to that title, but declined all occasions that had been given him, of directly and openly owning himself to be the Messiah : which conduct, though necessary, in order to carry on, and complete his ministry, without interruption from the Roman powers, was yet what the disciples of John, who had heard their master preaching up the kingdom of the Messiah without any disguise, could not understand ; nor account for any otherwise, than by supposing that Jesus arrogated not that honour to himself, as being conscious that it did not belong to him. And

these

\* Matt. ix. 7.



these suspicions might be raised, by their observing

3. The manner of our Saviour's life and conversation, which was so very different from that of their master's, and had so much less an outward appearance of sanctity in it. The *one came neither eating nor drinking\**, delighted in solitude, and lived in the practice of the highest rigours and austerities; the other *came eating and drinking*, lived in the world, and according to all the innocent customs of it; conversing freely and promiscuously with all sorts of men, even with Publicans and Sinners. And therefore they were tempted to think, that he, who was so far beneath their master in what they called perfection and holiness, could not be so far above him in his character and office, as, if he were the Messiah, he must have been.

These doubts, it is probable, that John had very often endeavoured to remove: but finding that they still stuck with his followers, he took the last and best way of satisfying them, by sending them on this message to Jesus himself, and giving them, by that means, an opportunity of being eye and ear witnesses of his works, and of his doctrine, which, he knew, would effectually convince them.

Thus much concerning the Enquiry: we are now to consider,

Secondly, The Reply which our Saviour made to it. In which reply there are two things observable; the manner and the matter of it.

As to the manner of it, we see, it is not direct and positive; but so ordered only, as to give them an occasion of answering that question themselves,

\* Matt. xi. 18.

themselves, which they had proposed to our blessed Saviour. This method, as it was agreeable to his conduct in other cases, and requisite to secure him from the accusations of those who watched his words, whenever he taught in public, so had it this further use in it; that it imprinted a conviction on the enquirers, after the most gentle, reasonable, and winning way, without commanding and extorting their assent by an authoritative declaration of the truth, which he thus invited them to receive. The proper motives and evidences only were laid before them; and they afterward were left to frame the conclusion from thence; that so their faith, which was to entitle them to such glorious privileges, might be a free and voluntary act, and the test of an ingenuous and well-disposed mind.

As to the matter of our Saviour's answer, three things there are which deserve to be weighed by us:—The remarkable gradation and rise there is in the particulars there mentioned: The appositeness of it in relation to the enquirers: And the general force and evidence of the argument contained in it.

1. To begin with the first of these: *Go and shew John again*, says our Saviour, *those things which ye do hear and see*; and then he particularly mentions the bodily cures he wrought on the deaf and blind, the lame and the lepers. He adds beyond this a yet plainer instance of a miraculous and divine power,—*the dead are raised up*; and he seems to advance still somewhat further, when he says, that even *the poor have the Gospel preached unto them*. An instance of goodness and condescension, with which



which the Jews had before been but little acquainted ! The prophets of that nation had been sent always to great and mighty persons, to reclaim their princes and rulers, and to reprove exemplary wickedness in high places ; and, to manifest the authority of their commission to them, were sometimes armed with the power of miracles. But nothing could be more wonderful, than to see a prophet in Jewry preaching to the poor and meek ; addressing himself to the lowest and meanest of men ; exhorting them to virtue, removing their prejudices, and rectifying their errors ! Such applications amidst that people were so unusual, and exceeding rare, that our Saviour thought fit to conclude the enumeration of the several proofs of his mission with these two particulars, *The dead are raised up*, says he, *and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them.*

2. The appositeness of our Saviour's answer, in relation to the persons who made the enquiry, is what we are next to consider. And here

First, we may observe, what a natural occasion he takes of resolving their doubts, from what he was even then saying and doing in their presence, *Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see :* That is, you come to learn of me, whether I am the Messiah : your master hath often told you, that I am ; but ye will not believe him. To him you should have given ear, who is my professed harbinger and herald ; to me it belongs not so properly to proclaim my own titles, and assert my own authority. For *if I bear witness of myself, my witness*  
is

*is not true\**. It is liable to suspicion, and likely to be of little weight and authority with you. If ye suspect your master's testimony of me, much more will ye suspect that which I give of myself. Behold therefore the testimony of God for *the works which I do* (which ye now see done before your eyes, they) *bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me†*. If ye still doubt who I am, why ask ye me? ask the works, which you cannot doubt whether I do or not; and they shall tell you.

Secondly, Nothing could be better contrived to satisfy these enquirers, of our Saviour's pre-eminence over the Baptist, than these wonders which they saw him perform, and heard him now appeal to; since they knew very well, that their master had not the gift of miracles, nor pretended to the power of doing them; and could not therefore but see, that his ministry was inferior to that of Christ, and subordinate to it; especially since from the Baptist's own mouth they had learnt, that the *doing of miracles* should be one illustrious and discriminating mark of the Messiah; for so much, I think, that passage in the Gospel of St. John sufficiently implies—*Many who resorted unto Jesus said, John did no miracles; but all things which John spoke of this man, were true‡*; that is, though he did none himself, yet he prophesied that Jesus should do them; and when his disciples therefore saw that prediction fulfilled, they were able themselves to answer their own question—*Art thou he that should come? or do we look for another?* Farther,

Thirdly,

\* John v. 31.

† Ibid. ver. 36.

‡ Ibid. x. 41.



Thirdly, the particular facts, which our Saviour here mentions, in order to insinuate his pre-eminence over the Baptist, are extremely well suited to that purpose. They are all acts of beneficence and kindness, wrought for the service and benefit of men, either for the instruction of their minds, or the healing of their bodies. And this, he tacitly suggests to them, was a far nobler employment, and carried in it a much greater degree of perfection and use, than the solitary life and rigid austerities of the Baptist, for which his disciples held him in such high veneration. He hints to them the reasons for which he lived and conversed thus publicly and familiarly, and applied himself to men in the most humane, easy, and affable manner, without distinguishing himself from others by any rough and frightening appearances, any thing extraordinary and singular, either in his look, attire, or behaviour for which the Baptist was remarkable: and he leaves them even in this respect to consider, whether his character was not superior to that of their master, and his administration ordained to more excellent purposes; and therefore he concludes his reply with words which have an eye to those prejudices they had entertained against him on this account; *blessed are they who are not offended in me!*

Beyond all this, it is, in the

Fourth place, extremely remarkable, that the answer of our Lord to these enquiring disciples is expressed in words taken from a prophecy of Isaiah concerning the Messiah. And Isaiah was, of all the Prophets, he, in whose writings the Baptist's

Baptist's followers were the most conversant, and for whom they had the greatest esteem and reverence; inasmuch as their master was there more particularly pointed out, the person and office of this cryer in the wilderness was there more exactly described, than in any other part of the sacred volume. And therefore what this Prophet testified concerning the Messiah, was best suited to work those into a reception of him, who had been led by his testimony to discern even their master himself, and to become his followers.

Now the places here referred to in Isaiah, are these, chap. lxi. 1. *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath appointed me to preach good tidings to the meek.* Εὐαγγελίζασθαι τοῖς πτωχοῖς, as it is in the translation of the Septuagint; and the very same phrase is employed here in the text πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται, *The poor have the Gospel preached unto them.* The rest of the particulars may be almost entirely supplied from another passage in the xxxvth of the same Prophet, ver. 4, 5, 6. *Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.*

It is very probable that the Baptist himself might have an eye to this passage, when he sent his doubting disciples with this question to our Saviour, *Art thou he that should come?* Since we find there a promise, within the compass of a few words, twice repeated, that God *would come, would come* to save his people; and therefore



fore our Saviour, very appositely, sent them back again to the same Prophet in his reply, and taught them by that means to understand the true drift and meaning of their master's question. It is as if he had said, You believe not the Baptist's testimony, that I am *he who should come*; yet surely Isaiah, upon whose authority ye have received the Baptist himself, will find credit with you; and he hath thus prophesied of me.

Every way, we see the answer of our blessed Redeemer was so wisely and graciously contrived, as to meet with all the prejudices and dispel all the doubts of these enquirers, and to lead them into an acknowledgment that they had found the Messiah whom they sought, *him who was to come*, and were no longer to *look for another*.

3. Nay, these words carry in them (as I in the third place observed) an argument of more general use and influence, and propose to us all the chief marks and characters of such miracles, as are sufficient to confirm the authority of any person pretending to be sent by God; and all of which concurred in the miracles done by our Messiah; as any unprejudiced person, who compares them together, may easily perceive. I shall but just mention them as they are hinted to us in the words of our Saviour's reply, and leave the farther consideration of them to your private meditations. Now the

1. Mark and character of such a miracle, as can be the proper evidence of a divine mission, is, that it be above the known powers of all natural causes: And such were all the instantane-

neous cures here mentioned; and particularly the raising men from the dead.

2. A second character is, that they be done publicly and in the face of the world, that there may be no room to suspect artifice and collusion. And such were the wonders to which our Lord appealed.—*Go tell John again*, says he, *those things which ye do hear and see*; which are done here before your eyes, and in the midst of a great multitude.

3. A third thing requisite is, that the doctrine which they are brought to vouch, be every way worthy of God, and fit thus to be sealed and attested by him. *The Gospel is preached*, says our Lord; the most perfect scheme of morality that ever mankind was acquainted with.

4. It is yet a farther recommendation of such miracles, if they carry in them marks not only of an astonishing power, but of good will also, and beneficence to men; as the healing of the blind, the lepers, and the lame, here in the text, manifestly did.

5. If the very doing of them was foretold, and the time and person declared by the spirit of prophecy; for so I have shewn that our Saviour, in his account of the mighty works here done, referred himself to the predictions of Isaiah.

6. If there be no appearances of self-interest and design in the worker of such miracles; and this objection our Lord also removes, where he says, that the *poor had the Gospel preached unto them*; the poor, to whom no man would apply, who proposed to himself temporal views and aims, which they (alas!) could no ways forward.



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Thus have I endeavoured to open to you, very largely, the significancy of each word in this important passage; and particularly the wonderful address of our Lord, in applying himself to those who resorted to him for instruction, and in reasoning them into conviction by arguments and suggestions peculiarly accommodated to the notions and apprehensions they were under. — Our chief business indeed, from such places as these, is, to inculcate into the minds of Christians the practical lessons of piety contained in the Gospel; to convince them of the reasonableness, beauty, and usefulness of those precepts; and to inflame them with ardent desires of excelling therein. However, such speculative enquiries as these have also their use, and may sometimes deserve a place in your minds; as contributing to raise your attention in perusing the several parts of Holy Writ, and to improve and quicken you in your manner of meditating upon them; and as assisting you toward a discovery of those inestimable treasures of divine wisdom, which are hidden in that sacred volume. We generally, I fear, consult the Scriptures too negligently, and reflect on them too superficially, with no greater degree of attention and care, than we employ in perusing mere human compositions (and I would to God we employed always as much in the one case as in the other!) We do not sufficiently consider, who it is that speaks to us there, nor what it is that he says: what weight, what fulness of sense, what excellent variety of matter, and wonderful depth of thought, there must needs be in words dictated by, or at least spoken under, the overruling influence of infinite wisdom. And therefore,

fore, though the Scriptures are read every day in our churches (and sometimes perhaps consulted in our closets) yet we make but slow proficiency toward a true taste, and a clear discernment, of those high truths which are contained in them. We dwell on the letter only, on what offers itself to us at the first view; but we do not make ourselves acquainted with the life and spirit of them. And yet for this reason, among others, these holy writings were left us by God, that we might, as good David speaks, *exercise ourselves in them day and night*, have perpetual matter for our enquiries into, and improvements in, the knowledge of things divine, and drink always of these waters of life, without either allaying our thirst, or exhausting the spring from whence they flow.

The difference between the Holy Scriptures and other writings, is much the same, as that between the works of art and nature. The works of art appear to most advantage at first; but will not bear a nice and repeated examination: the more curiously we pry into them, the less we shall admire them. But the works of nature will bear a thousand views and reviews, and yet still be instructive and still wonderful. In like manner the writings of mere men, tho' ever so excellent in their kind, yet strike and surprize us most upon our first perusal of them; and then flatten upon our taste by degrees, as our familiarity with them increaseth. Whereas the word of Revelation is, like its author, of an endless and unsearchable perfection; and the more we look into it, and revolve it in our minds, the more reason still shall we find to ad-  
B b 2 mire



mire and adore the wisdom of the great Revealer of it.

I have therefore hinted to you some thoughts concerning the drift of our Saviour's reasoning, and the peculiar appositeness of it in relation to the persons who made the enquiry in the text; that I might excite you from thence to meditate in like manner on the other parts of the book of God, which are equally *profitable for doctrine, and able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus*\*.

Wherefore, *search the Scriptures*, for as in *them ye have eternal life*, so have ye room also for an eternal growth and improvement in that knowledge, which leads to it; in that knowledge, which we can here attain unto in part only, but shall hereafter, when the veil of this flesh is done away, more perfectly comprehend: and the more earnestly we aspire after it, and labour for it in this state of imperfection, the more exalted a degree of it shall we possess in another world. And do thou, "Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our instruction, grant that we may in such wise read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ."

\* 2 Tim. iii. 15.

## On St. Andrew's Day.

November 30th.

By Dr. ADAM LITTLETON.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. iv. Ver. 18, 19, 20.

*And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.*

*And he saith unto them, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*

*And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.*

THE holy Jesus having been inaugurated to his prophetic office chap. iii. by the descent of the Spirit and a voice from heaven, when he was baptized of John in Jordan; and immediately after that by the Spirit led from thence into the wilderness, and there put upon a solemn trial and probationership for the exercise of his ministerial function in his forty days fast and temptation, of which we have an account in this 4th chapter; we find him in the verse before the text actually entering upon his office. *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;* which is the very form of words his fore-runner had used before. From that time, that is, after he was come into Galilee, and



having left Nazareth, came and dwelt in Capernaum, as it is ver. 13.

Now for the better execution of this office of preaching, of making known the will of God and calling sinners to repentance, and for the continuance of the work of the Gospel after his own departure, and the propagation of Christian doctrine over the world, he himself having confined his own walk within the land of Jewry; he found it was necessary, at least judged it expedient to choose and take unto him some disciples for the constant attendance of his person and assistance in the work, twelve in number according to the tribes of Israel, of which there were twelve princes. These, in the 10th chapter, he sends forth with a commission to preach to the Jews only, using the same form of words, as he himself and the Baptist had done: from which mission or sending forth they were called Apostles.

Beside these twelve, he appointed other seventy also, like the seventy elders whom Moses took to him for his assistance, Num. xi. 16. and those also for the ministerial function.

Those twelve were to be of a higher rank and more eminent place in the church of Christ, into whose place and stead episcopal dignity was to succeed. These seventy were of a lower order, upon which bottom the common priesthood stands. This as it is the sense of pious antiquity, so it is the fundamental reason of the diversity of orders in the church.

The election and ordination of two of those twelve we have the story of, in the words I now read to you. *And Jesus walking by the sea*  
of

of Galilee, saw two brethren, &c. where we have three main parts.

I. The *occasion*; that, as he was walking along by the sea-side, he saw the two brethren about their ordinary employ.

II. The *call*; which was to take off that employment, and to put them upon a nobler, yet not unlike exercise.

III. Their *obedience*; that they readily left what they were about, and immediately entered themselves into his and the Gospel's service.

I. First, the occasion contains in it  
Several circumstances of time and place.  
Some characters of the two persons.

I. The time when this was done is implied in the particle *and*. *And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren*: by which it appears, that it was not long after he began himself to preach, that he called these two and the rest of the twelve to his assistance; so it is in the 6th verse before. *From that time Jesus began to preach*; and then presently, as he walked by the sea-side, seeing these *two brethren* he called them.

Which might not be nevertheless, and certainly was not so presently neither, but that he had by his doctrine and some miracles given some proof first to the world, that a great prophet, *the great prophet*, was arisen; and that he had gathered several disciples in the larger sense, I mean ordinary hearers and followers, whom his discourses and works had convinced into a belief of his divine commission.

Having therefore made this fair step into public knowledge, and confirmed his authority to the people, he now thinks of taking to him



some associates, select disciples, who might be companions of life and partners of labour. These were to be the confidants of his counsels, the intimates of his friendship, the ministers of his word, the pillars of his church, and the witnesses of his cause both in life and death; most of them, all but one, sealing with their blood the truth of what they taught from the discoveries of their gracious master, and the influences of his blessed spirit.

Among those who were to be of this number, these two brethren, Peter and Andrew, were to have the pre-eminence, the honour and favour of the first call; and upon this account Peter stands first and has the precedence in all the rolls of the Apostles, as to the priority and seniority of his call, and not for any other pretended privilege.

Blessed pair! to whom your gracious Lord first deigned his heavenly familiarities, vouchsafed his earliest friendship, and gave you so timely an advancement in his service, that you appear the first-born in the regeneration.

Happy brethren, who had your call into the vineyard in the first hour! The greater your labour, true; but withal the higher your dignity, the larger your reward!

May I, and such as I am, have the happiness to be called at any time, be it the eleventh hour, before the day of grace shut in; and may I be thought worthy to be an *ostiarius*, a door-keeper, if not of that sacred college, whereof you were principal members, yet of \* God's house in general, whereof you were such eminent guides and patterns.

\* Psal. lxxxiv. 10.

This for the time ; next for the place.

It was as he was walking *by the sea of Galilee* ; which is elsewhere called the Sea of Tiberias, a large town situated upon it, and the same with the lake of Genesareth : for indeed it was in strictness of speech but a lake ; yet according to Scripture phrase, which terms any great water, even the great vessel in Solomon's temple, a sea ; so, in respect of its vast compass, it might deserve the name of sea.

I shall not now stand to give you the topography or full description of it, being we are only upon the beach, to take a turn or two upon the shore-side, and to look, as our Saviour here did, upon the fishermen. For it was *lacus piscosus*, a lake that abounded with fish ; and by that means maintained several poor families in their fishing trade, and helped to make provisions plentiful to the neighbour country, which being so very populous might have lived but uneasily, had it not been for the good neighbourhood of this sea.

For this reason some critics tell us, it is called *Galilee of the Nations* \*, that is, by an Hebraism, Galilee full of people : though others turning the proper name into an appellative, interpret גליל הגוים *confinium gentium*, the boundary or limit of Palestine, by which it was divided from the neighbouring nations, which on that side bordered upon it. And so it might, as to that part of the country, serve also for a bulwark of defence to the holy land.

Nor only so ; but by convenience of boats it gave great advantage for resort and traffic, which might be one cause too to render it so

\* Isai. ix. 1,

populous.



populous. From this opportunity of traffic it was, that St. Matthew, whilst a publican, kept his toll-booth, to take account of goods imported or exported.

Upon both these considerations, that Galilee was so populous, and in the borders and marches of Palestine, it is more than probable, that the Son of God made choice of Galilee for the place of his residence, where he first entered upon his prophetic office; that he might have the greater opportunities of teaching his doctrine, and shewing his miracles amidst throngs and multitudes of people: and that, though he himself scarcely ever went in person out of Judea, yet the neighbour nations might be favoured with some glimpses of his divinity, who was to be *a light to lighten the Gentiles* \*.

Though after all he was content without his expected and deserved success: for neither discourses nor miracles could prevail with many, with most of them to come in to the faith and profession of Christ. Hence it is that he upbraids Capernaum and Bethsaida †, places which he had ennobled with his presence, with his divine sayings and his mighty doings, for their unbelief and impenitence. And the like entertainment he found upon trial on the opposite heathen shore; where the Gadarenes ‡, a people as churlish as their swine, declared their dislike of his chargeable miracles, and though he had so highly obliged the country, as to dispossess it of a whole legion, to disband a whole regiment of devils at once; yet the loss of their swine made it a thankless and a fruitless office:  
thankless

\* Luke ii. 32. † Matt. xi. 21, 23. ‡ Luke viii. 26.

thankless to him that performed it, and fruitless to them for whom it was performed.

The foresight of this ill reception, and afterward the experience of it, made not our blessed Lord ever a whit the less in love with Galilee. Here he pitched his abode, for he dwelt at Capernaum \*. Happy place, to have had such a glorious inmate, hadst thou had grace to have understood thy happiness. Hence he chose Apostles most, if not all of them, Galileans. Ἄνδρες Γαλιλαῖοι, *Ye men of Galilee*, as the angel calls them, was a compellation of as rhetorical a strain, and that sounds as well, as that usual one of the Greek orator's to his fellow-citizens, Ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, *Ye men of Athens*. Here it was *by the sea of Galilee*, that the blessed Jesus was walking at this time.

Walking was his constant exercise, to find out objects of spiritual and corporal mercy. This account St. Peter gives of him, that *he went about*, walked over all the country ere he had done, beginning from Galilee; but he did not walk only for the walk's sake. *He went about*, says he, *doing good and healing all manner of diseases*. *He went about*, as the sun goes his round, to dispense light and warmth, to communicate life and vigour to every thing his active beams light upon. All his steps, whither ever he went, dropped fatness.

O may every pious soul not miss to meet him in his walks! and sure enough it may, it shall do so, if itself continue to keep in his ways.

The devil also is a great walker, as himself tells God in Job, upon his demand whence he came; *he walks to and fro, up and down, in the*

\* Mark iv. 13.

† Acts x. 28.



*the earth*; but it is upon a destructive design, *to seek whom he may devour* \*.

Let Jesuits boast their travels and their walks: it is not the example of the holy Jesus they follow; but that of a worse spirit, who orders his walks for mischief and ruin to mankind.

*Jesus was walking.* We seldom meet with him otherwise than on foot; only once, when he was to make his triumphal entrance into the city, and that to fulfil a prophecy too, *Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and riding upon an ass and the foal of an ass* †. It should seem that then, for the greater state and solemnity, he made use of both by turns.

Another time there was, as tradition tells us, or at least as painters represent it, that we find him mounted; when in his infancy he made his escape into Egypt.

So unwearied was his love, that, even to his bodily weariness, with indefatigable pains he walked up and down, to scatter health to the sick and salvation to sinners. He took a survey of the whole country, measured it with his own paces, and streamed forth blessings wherever he came. It fared with all places, with all persons, that touched him, or he them, that came near him, or that he came near, as it did with the woman ‡ that had the issue of blood, that they found virtue come from him. And so it was here.

As he was walking along, *he saw these two brethren.* He saw them. I do not take this his seeing of them to have been casual. He saw them so, as that he foresaw them too, in the eternal

\* Job. i. 7. † Pet. v. 8. ‡ Matt. xxi. 5. † Mark v. 30.

eternal council of his election. He saw them as he saw Nathaniel, before he came at them, or they at him \*. He saw them fit for his choice, for his service; at least by seeing them he made them so. He looked Peter and his brother Andrew here into faith and compliance; as he did afterward look Peter upon his denial of him, into repentance †.

This is not all, that the sight was not casual, by chance; but farther I doubt not to believe, that this was not the first sight he had of them. He had not only foreseen them in his election, which made him come now purposely to see them and give them a call; but he had in all likelihood seen them before too, before this time.

For so another evangelist, St. John, who in the latter part of this Gospel here, was one of the other *two brethren*, fishermen too, that were called presently after, gives the account of Peter and Andrew in a different manner; because it must be supposed at a different time and upon a different occasion.

He tells us, that, as Jesus passed by, the Baptist ‡ giving an honourable character of him, Andrew one of his disciples being then present, and hearing what his then master said, was tempted with a holy curiosity to make farther inquiries. He goes after him, stays with him all the day, and is so well satisfied with his reception, that he goes straightway to find out his brother Simon ||, tells him the story how he had met with the Messiah, and brings him along with him to Jesus.

This is quite another business from what we have here.

4

That

\* John i. 48.

† Luke xxii. 61.

‡ John i. 37.

|| Ver. 39. 41, 42.



That of St. John was then the first sight that they had of Christ, or he of them; it is like they were not yet called. This of St. Matthew the second at least, when they received their call.

That interview and conference there, was but the introduction into acquaintance; this here was a perfect engagement into service; when they left their nets, their former trade and employ, and followed him, henceforward giving themselves up entirely to his attendance and disposal.

And thus from the circumstances of time and place, when and where this transaction was managed between Christ and these two fishermen: we come next to speak of the character of the persons now chosen to be Apostles.

As to their number; *two*.

As to their relation; *brethren*.

As to their names; *Simon called Peter and Andrew his brother*.

As to their trade or profession; *fishermen*.

As to their present employment; what they were a-doing, when he walked by and saw them; they were *casting a net into the sea*. He *saw two brethren, &c.*

These particulars I shall lightly touch at by way of postill, yet so as not to neglect any thing, may come in our way that may be of use either for meditation or practice.

I. First *two*. He saw two. Pythagoras hath reproached the number of two, as the worst of numbers; because it is the first departure from unity. But God, who made all things in number, weight, and measure, hath sufficiently justified this number among the rest, by making  
all

all our most useful parts in pairs; our selves of two essential parts, body and soul, flesh and spirit; human nature of two sexes; *male and female created he them*\*; and these two made one again by marriage †. Two tables of the law, two covenants, two testaments. In the mysteries of our religion, as there are three persons in one essence of the Godhead, so there are two natures in one person of Christ.

But to proceed in these like descants would be a nicety even to impertinence.

The wise man has pronounced a *Wo to him that is alone*‡; and commends two in several instances of life.

Solitude, to be alone, I confess may do very well for contemplation and for closet devotion, when we are before him who seeth in secret. But for the duties of an active life, company, two does better ||; when by sharing one another's cares and griefs, and by imparting one to another mutually their joys and satisfactions, they lessen the trouble and heighten the comfort one of another. Thus a heavy burden becomes easy to two, which to one would have been insupportable. And on the other hand, when one lends light to another's candle, he doth at once brighten and improve his own.

This is that which through all ages, in all places of the world, hath made the name of friendship sacred and dear; that being, if it be right friendship, a mutual communication of souls, of interests, and of all concerns.

Our Saviour taught this; *where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the*

\* Gen. i. 27. † Gen. ii. 24. ‡ Eccl. iv. 10. || Mat. vi. 6.



*the midst of them* \* ; implying that two persons, so met, make a Christian congregation. And his practice was alike ; sending his disciples two by two. To this we may apply that, *ne Hercules, ne diabolus quidem, contra duos*. Two such, so met, so sent, in Christ's name shall be too hard for any one to try against, be it the devil himself.

I know, good company, in the common and abused notion of it, is ordinarily made *honestamentum vitii*, and passes for a plausible excuse of debauchery ; but take it in a good, that is, in the right sense, it is *firmamentum virtutis*, a strengthening and security of virtue ; and Christ himself has promised, that where two are met *in his name*, that is, upon a good account, he will vouchsafe them his presence and assistance.

And so certainly it was here with these two ; they were together in Christ's name, though at the ordinary works of their calling ; for Christ comes in to them, and honours them with a higher calling for their diligence in that.

And sure, they were the more chearful at their work, and never a whit the less acceptable to Christ, that they were,

2. *Brethren*. Christ chose several of his Apostles by pairs, for mutual assistance and in-dearment. Thus the two next in the latter part of this Gospel, James and John, were brethren too, sons of Zebedee. Thus stood Peter and Andrew in a natural relation, upon which now a spiritual relation, a supernatural one, is superinduced. Now they are *fratres in Christo*, brethren in the Lord ; and the in-dearments of the obligation are much in-hanced.

Brother

\* Mat. xviii. 20. Mar. vi. 7.

Brother and sister was the usual compellation of every Christian man and woman at first. It was a calumny that some Heathens put then upon Christians, that by these terms of kindness they improved adultery into incest. I wish it were not too true, that of late some Christians themselves, if I may so call them, put as great a reproach upon Christianity, who use these terms only for a knavish combination of worldly interest.

*O how happy a thing it is, says the Psalmist, to see brethren dwell together in unity! \** A happy thing sure to dwell so, when it is so happy a thing to see it; and yet so unhappy is the temper, the distemper of men, that it is almost as rare, as it is a happy thing, to see it.

Cain slew his brother Abel, when he made the fourth part of the world; Ishmael persecuted Isaac son of the same father; and Esau vowed the death of half himself, his twin-brother Jacob: the same pernicious humour has run and does still in the world.

Neither the near ties of nature, nor the stricter ones of religion, can hold us together. Any little or no provocation makes us enemies; who were born and obliged to be friends. Every slight prejudice alienates us from one another, and a petty difference of judgement engages the affections to side with it; till at last we are got to an irreconcilable distance, and can give no reason why we are so, but only because we are so.

O that we, who pretend to own one God, might worship him with one heart, and confess him with one mouth, and serve him with one shoulder; that common danger might now at last cement our divisions, and reunite us into



one interest; whereby we might the better be enabled to stand and bear up against that shock of destruction, which the known adversary of our laws and religion threatens to bring, nay is, for aught we know, bringing upon us.

Surely these brethren here were of another mind, than Christian brethren are of now-a-days: that is, they were of the same mind, and lovingly agreed in the common work of their ordinary calling; and afterward, no question, as lovingly agreed in Gospel work; to which here they had an extraordinary call.

*Simon called Peter and Andrew his brother:* the word again repeated, to shew that now they were to be brethren upon a double account of generation and regeneration both.

3. *Simon called Peter*; when so called? Now upon his call, Christ naming him in the Syriac language Cephas\*, which in the Greek is rendered Πέτρος, and signifies a rock or stone. And says Christ, *upon this rock will I build my church*: which refers not to Peter's person; for then he would have said, ἐπὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ, upon Peter himself; but he says ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ *upon this rock*, that is, upon the strong foundation of that faith, which Peter had in the name of them all profest.

It is true, Peter stands every where first upon the roll, which may bespeak a priority, that he was the senior Apostle, but cannot argue any superiority over the rest; much less that he was to be an universal pastor, who should exercise an authority, as Christ's vicar, upon all his fellows, in their several provinces and districts, whither they were to go after their Lord's departure.

Now

\* Matt. xvi. 18.

Now so far was Peter from such an encroachment, that he keeps modestly within his bounds, and his Epistle though general, he directs to those of the dispersion, that is, to the poor Christian Jews, that were scattered abroad in Asia; as being the Apostle of the circumcision \*: whereas it was St. Paul's prerogative to be the doctor of the Gentiles, who among others of those Gentiles writes to the Romans themselves †.

But be this how it will; let them bestow what privilege or preheminance they please upon St. Peter, and let the bishop of Rome be his successor. This bright diamond had its flaws, as well as its lustres. He denied his master and bound his denial with oaths; it need not be a question whether his successors have done so too, who have undermined the very fundamentals of Christian religion.

I shall produce but two instances, wherein we may compare St. Peter with those who pretend to derive from him; one is in point of his doctrine, the other in regard of his example. He lays it down for a rule; *submit yourselves to every ordinance of man; whether to the king as supreme ‡, &c.* and bids us, as we would be thought to *fear God, to honour the king*. This is his doctrine: he scruples not the king's supremacy. What do his successors teach? That it is lawful for one in Peter's chair to depose or excommunicate kings, and then for any one to murder, assassinate, or any way to remove them. This is their avowed doctrine; this has been their wicked practice. What would St. Peter, what would Christ himself, the prince of peace,

C c 2

say

\* Gal. ii. 8.

† 2 Tim. i. 11.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 13.



say to such a man? Surely what he said to Peter himself in another case. *Get thee behind me, Satan* \*.

Then as to St. Peter's example, he was a married man. We read of his wife's mother †, and we owe an ancient copy (as they tell us) of the Greek Bible to his daughter's pen: and so were several others of the Apostles too; St. Paul takes notice, and vouches his own liberty to do the like ‡. What do they do? They damn a married priesthood, and prefer concubinage in that order before marriage, which, the Apostle tells us, is *honourable among all men* §. What would their predecessor say to this? What doth his brother Paul say, who took up Peter himself upon a much smaller matter? Why he calls it *the doctrine of devils, the forbidding to marry* ||.

What should I meddle with this *Camarina* any farther, when a religion, which pretends itself to be the Catholic and only religion in the world, is so suited to carnal lusts and worldly interests, so contrary to all rules of morality as well as of religion, as if it were the direct antipodes to primitive Christianity?

But enough and perhaps too much of St. Peter. Somewhat of his brother, the saint of the day, and I hasten towards a conclusion.

Saint Andrew has little said of him in Scripture; we shall not eke it out with fabulous tradition.

He is reckoned by St. Matthew \*\*, the second, that is, next to his brother; though St. Mark †† and

\* Mat. xvi. 23.

§ Heb. xiii. 4.

†† Mar. iii. 18.

† Mat. viii. 14.

|| 1 Tim. iv. 3.

‡ 1 Cor. ix. 5.

\*\* Matt. x. 2.

and St. Luke too \*, make him the fourth in order, by placing James and John, who were of the next call, betwixt them, that they might set him next to Philip his townsman.

The two brothers were born, it should seem, at Bethsaida, which is therefore called the city of Andrew and Peter †, but they dwelt at Capernaum together in one house; whence that which St. Matthew calls Peter's house, St. Luke Simon's house, St. Mark says was the house of Simon and Andrew. And as they lived, so they loved and drove the same trade of fishing together.

But not to give away all the privileges to St. Peter, St. Andrew may demand his share as a brother, as an Apostle. For he had this advantage, which we do not find Peter had, that he was a disciple of the Baptist, before he came to Christ ‡; and so had helped to prepare his way; and that he of himself followed Christ to his lodging, and there acquainted himself with the Messiah first, and then conducted and brought his brother Simon to him: for which or some like reason St. John places Andrew before Peter §.

4. We come in the last place to their employment; of which a word or two, and we have done.

They were fishermen, illiterate persons, of mean education; which made for the reputation of the Gospel, that it could not be looked upon as a thing of human invention, acquired by study; but came immediately from God, who enabled the preachers of it, these fish-

C c 3

men,

\* Acts i. 13.  
§ Joh. i. 44.

† John i. 44.

‡ Joh. i. 40.



men, with extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers.

Nor is this any encouragement or justification for lay teachers to take upon them holy offices : since now miracles are ceased, and ordinary means are to be applied to, and human knowledge consecrated to the service of the temple.

The Apostles were inspired ; and their very ordination qualified them. When their hands were filled, which was the ancient form of consecrating priests ; their heads were filled with knowledge, and their hearts with grace.

But for any person to venture upon the ministry without call or qualification is a horrible presumption ; such run without sending, and *how shall they preach unless they be sent* \* ?

5. Lastly, the particular action, which our Saviour saw them a-doing, was *casting a net into the sea* ; which, whether it were to let it down for a draught, or, as a learned interpreter gathers from that which he takes to be a parallel place to this Luke v. 2. it were only to wash it, it being on the shore-side ; they were in their calling.

And it is a remarkable observation, that those whom Christ called to be his disciples, he took at their employment.

A happy thing to be well employed, that neither grace nor temptation may find us idle. For idleness gives temptation an easy admittance, and lays in the way of grace as great a discouragement.

It is honest industry that is usually rewarded with larger trusts ; and to him that is diligent  
and

\* Rom. x. 15.

and faithful in a little, more shall be given. Thus he that executes the office of a deacon well, purchases to himself a good degree\*, makes himself a fair step to a higher preferment†: and in proportion these two painful well meaning brethren commence Apostles, and from fishermen are advanced to be fishers of men.

To state the case aright. Not only Christians, but all men whatever, have a double calling, general and particular. Our general calling is, as men to act and demean ourselves according to natural and moral obligation; and, as Christians, according to Gospel rules and duties of religion. Every man's particular calling is that to which he stands particularly engaged by his quality and birth, or by his condition of life, or by his voluntary undertaking.

Now the duties of a man's general calling may and must run through all the instances of that particular state which God hath called him to. Wherefore in all professions, in all employments, *vir bonus*, an honest man, ought to come into the definition. So then when a man thus orders himself, to be in the general an honest good man, a man truly religious, he is generally in some good measure well qualified for any particular state of life God shall call him to.

And thus was it with these fishermen; they had simplicity, honesty, industry; qualities that fitted them so far for the service of the Gospel. And though now in an ordinary regular course, there are peculiar capacities, preparations and qualifications required to the ministry, which

C c 4

are

\* Luke xix. 17.

† Tim. iii. 13.



are not to be attained but by long study, serious meditations and some experimented skill in the divine science of converting sinners and saving souls; yet these were abundantly supplied to them by the teachings of a gracious master and the infusions of the Blessed Spirit, which raised them to extraordinary abilities.

O may I and every one of you, whatever our particular callings may be, so mind our general calling, as we are men, as we are Christians in the obligations of morality and religion; that when our Lord comes to look upon us, as he did here upon these two brethren, we may be, if not dignified by him, as they were; yet accepted of him, being found so doing \*.

We should now proceed to Christ's call and their obedience, the two remaining parts.

The call has in it a command and a promise.

The command is, *follow me*, where we are to explain what it is to follow Christ; to attend upon him, to learn of him, to imitate him; and particularly, as ministers, to preach the truth and to suffer, to die in testimony of it, as he did, if God call us thereunto.

The promise in these words; *I will make you fishers of men*; where we are to shew the analogy and proportion between fishing and preaching: to wit, in a patient attendance, in a prudent application, in hazards and toils, and lastly in tedious and wearisome disappointments.

III. Their obedience is exprest, that upon his call they followed him; where also there is,

The readiness of it; they did it *straitway*.

And their self-resignation; *they left their nets*, their former course of life and worldly interests.

But

\* Matt. xxiv. 46.

But I should too much trespass upon your patience, should I engage any further.

May Almighty God, who gave such grace unto St. Andrew and the rest of his holy Apostles, that they readily obeyed the calling of his son Jesus Christ, and followed him without delay; grant unto us all, that we being called by his holy word, may forthwith give up ourselves obediently to fulfil his holy commandments, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Amen.*



28 SE60



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## On St. Thomas's Day.

December 21.

By Dr. Matthew HOLE.

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St. JOHN, Chap. xx. Ver. 24, to the end.

*Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came; the other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe, &c.*

**T**HE Saint we are to commemorate this day, is St. Thomas, of whose parents and kindred we find no mention in holy Scripture, nor does ecclesiastical history give any account of them; only one author, and he of no great credit, Simeon Metaphrastes by name, tells us, that he was born of mean parents, and brought up to the trade of fishing, but had afterward a very liberal and ingenious education. How this can consist with the meanness of his parents, or upon what this account of his is grounded, does not appear elsewhere.

However, that he was a Jew is certain, and, as some conjecture, a Galilean; that he was among the rest called to be one of Christ's disciples, and reckoned in the number of the Apostles, the history of the Gospel plainly declares.

That

That he bore a true love and affection to our Saviour, and was willing to live and die with him, appears from that passage in John xi. 16. where, when Christ had determined to go into Judea, to raise his beloved Lazarus from the dead, the other Apostles dissuaded him from going thither, because some of the Jews had threatened, and a little before had attempted to stone him; but Thomas boldly said to them, *Let us also go, that we may die with him:* which shewed the constancy of his mind, in adhering to him both in life and death.

When the Apostles were sent abroad to plant and propagate the Christian faith, the province assigned to St. Thomas was the country of Parthia, where he converted many of the Medes and Persians, with others of the neighbouring nations; and passing through Æthiopia, he came at last to India, where he preached the Gospel with that wonderful success, that great numbers of that heathen and barbarous people cheerfully embraced the Christian faith every where.

Among the rest, he converted one Sagamo, a prince of the country, whose example was soon followed with the conversion of multitudes of his kindred and people; by which means churches were erected among them, and a sort of Christians, called by the name of St. Thomas-Christians, were settled there; a succession of which is remaining in those parts to this day.

This Gospel for the day gives us some farther account of St. Thomas, here called Didymus; it being usual in those days for those that travelled into several countries, to take two names of the same import in different languages, the  
2 better



better to converse with the different people where they came: So St. Peter had to that name added that of Cephias, both which signify a *stone*. And thus St. Thomas was likewise surnamed Didymus, both which signify a *twin*.

From the name pass we to some more material things relating to this Apostle. And here to pass by the slowness of his understanding, intimated in that passage, John 14. 4, 5. where our Saviour speaking to his disciples of his departing from them, and going to his Father, tells them, that they knew both the place and the way whither he was going; to which Thomas replied, that *he knew not whither he was going*, and much less *the way that led to it*, tho' Christ had just before told him: our Saviour, to comply with the weakness of his apprehension, told him again, that he was returning to heaven from whence he came, and that he himself was the way thither, where all that believe in him shall surely follow.

But the principal thing related in this Gospel, is St. Thomas's behaviour and discourse touching our Saviour's resurrection. In which we have an account,

First, Of the backwardness of his faith in that great point, and the palpable evidence he required therein for his satisfaction.

Secondly, Of the full conviction and assurance of his faith in it afterward, together with the ground and reason of both. For the

First, The backwardness of St. Thomas's faith in this great article of Christ's resurrection, that may be easily gathered from the many circumstances that attended this great action. In the evening of that very day whereon he rose,  
which

which was the first day of the week, St. John tells us, in this chapter, that his disciples were assembled together in a private house, and shut the doors for fear of the Jews, to avoid the dangers they might meet with from those that opposed and sought to hinder his resurrection; but in this privacy, Christ, by an act of his divine power, opened the doors, and came in among them, saluting them in that common form of salutation, *Peace be unto you*, ver. 19. At whose approach, St. Luke tells us, *they were terrified and affrighted, as if they had seen a spirit*, taking him at first for a spectre or apparition: to remove which fear, Christ shewed them his hands and his side, bidding them to *handle and see him, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have*; withal, calling for meat, and eating before them, by which they were delivered from the surprize, and *were glad when they saw the Lord*.

At this meeting St. Thomas *was not with them, when Jesus came*, the disciples not being then come together after their dispersion upon our Saviour's suffering: however, *the other disciples said unto him, we have seen the Lord*; letting him know how he came in among them, and gave them plain proof of his being alive again.

But Thomas obstinately refused to give any credit to them, saying, *That except he saw in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side, he would not believe*. A strange piece of incredulity in Thomas! who, beside the report of the Apostles, knew that the Prophets had plainly foretold his resurrection, and that Christ had often told him, that *he must rise*



*rise again from the dead.* He could not but know his power of doing it; from what he had seen of raising Lazarus, and others from the grave; and yet after all this, and many other miracles which his own eyes had seen, to doubt of a truth so clearly revealed, and so well attested, could not but seem very strange and unaccountable.

\* But our church, in the collect for this day, hath given us some account of this matter, to wit, that *God Almighty suffered his holy Apostle Thomas to be doubtful of his Son's resurrection, for the more or better confirmation of our faith in that great article:* for had all the Apostles presently believed the first report of it, they might have been thought a company of easy credulous persons, that could believe any thing as they would have it, and that they had a mind to impose upon the world by a cunningly devised fable of their own inventing or spreading; which must have proved a great stumbling-block or hindrance to the faith of future ages. Now,

To prevent this dangerous prejudice, God was pleased to permit some of them to fall into very great doubts about it; and to require the utmost satisfaction that distrust and infidelity itself could desire. When those pious women, who were first at the sepulchre, and found not the body of Christ, came and told the Apostles, that he was indeed risen, and that they had seen a vision of angels, who declared him to be alive; it is said, *Their words seemed unto them as an idle tale, and they believed them not* \*. They took it for a story begotten only by the strength of fancy and desire, in them that easily believed what

\* Luke xxiv. 11.

what they earnestly desired : yea, we find here, that when our Saviour came into the room where they were with the doors shut, they took him at first for a mere phantom or apparition, and would not presently believe it was he. And when they after told Thomas of it, who was then absent, he utterly rejected their news, and refused to give any manner of credit to it without better evidence ; which things were permitted by God, to encrease the evidence, and to give the strongest confirmation to this truth, that it was capable of, for the benefit of posterity.

But how was St. Thomas cured of this obstinate infidelity ? Why, in eight days after, which was the next Lord's-day, our Saviour made another appearance to his disciples, when Thomas was present ; for *being within, and Thomas with them, Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said again, Peace be unto you.* Where looking upon Thomas, he called to him, saying, *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side ; and be not faithless but believing.* By which he condescended to give him all the satisfaction he desired, letting him see and feel the wounds made in his hands by the nails, and thrusting his hand into the hole made in his side by the soldier's spear : who being convinced by such plain and palpable proofs that it was indeed he, and in the same body that he suffered in, his faith revived, and made him with wonder and joy to cry out, *My Lord, and my God.* His doubts now all vanished on a sudden, and a clear convincing light was let in upon his soul, by which he chearfully received him for his  
Lord



Lord and Master ; and having rescued himself from the power of death, he calls him his God, upon whom he may safely rely for life and salvation.

Thus we see both the backwardness of St. Thomas's faith at first in the great point of Christ's resurrection, and likewise the full conviction and satisfaction he after received about it. By both which God Almighty hath given his church an instance to confirm us in the belief of this great truth beyond all farther doubt or contradiction. And they must be monsters of infidelity and ingratitude, who shall call in question the truth of our Lord's resurrection, after so full evidence and confirmation of it.

But what was our Saviour's saying, or carriage to St. Thomas upon this solemn profession of his faith in him? Why, our Saviour said unto him, *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* Where he partly blames the backwardness of his faith, that he was so hardly brought to it; and partly commends him, that he believed at last upon what he had seen. And it is as if he had said, Thomas, thou dost well to believe thine own eyes, and to be convinced by the evidence of thy own sight; but it had been much better if thou hadst believed sooner upon my word, and the report of the other Apostles. So that from these words of our Saviour, we may gather these two things,

1st. That to believe upon the testimony of our senses, is sufficient to salvation. And

2dly. That to believe upon the testimony of God without it, is a more excellent and commendable act of faith, and will be attended with  
a greater

a greater reward; for he more especially pronounces them *blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believed.*

1st, I say, That to believe upon the testimony of sense, is sufficient to salvation; for our Saviour accepted and approved of St. Thomas's faith, which was grounded upon the sight and feeling of the wounds of his body. And upon this was the faith of the Apostles and others in a great measure founded: for when they doubted the reality of his resurrection, and took him for a ghost or spectre, he shewed them his hands and his feet, bidding them to handle him and see him; *for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have:* where he appeals to the judgment of their senses about the truth of his body; that it was he himself, and that he was risen in the same body in which he suffered, according to the predictions of the Prophets, and as he himself had told them. And Christ was well pleased with the faith and conviction that proceeded from that sensible demonstration; for God hath given us senses, not barely for the uses of this life, but for the services of the next, to be instruments of righteousness unto holiness, to administer to God's glory, and to promote the piety and devotion of the soul. Seeing we say is believing, and *faith comes by hearing; and what we have seen with our eyes* (saith St. John) *and our hands have handled of the word of life, declare we unto you.* And when we use our senses to these purposes, we exalt and sanctify them: *because thou hast seen, thou hast believed.*

But our Saviour pronounces a greater *blessedness on those that have not seen, and yet have believed;* to signify to us, that to believe upon



the testimony of God's word, is a more noble and commendable act of faith, than to believe upon the testimony of our senses. For if we believe the witness of men (saith the Apostle) the witness of God is greater, and carries better evidence and conviction.

And this is the faith of all that have or shall live since our Lord's ascension into heaven; for we cannot now behold him with our bodily eyes, as they did who lived in the days of his flesh: and so we cannot have that sensible evidence by seeing and handling of him, as they had. But yet we have that which is much better: for beside the testimony we have from their senses and infidelity, we have the testimony of God's word, which St. Peter stiles a more sure word of prophecy, upon which we may more safely rely; together with that rational evidence and assurances of the truth of things, that is abundantly enough to satisfy any wise or sober man, though he did not see the things done before his own eyes.

And this is a more acceptable and rewardable sort of faith, than that which is in a manner forced upon us by the impressions of our senses, as being received upon the better foundation of divine revelation. In the former, the senses may put in for some share of the honour, being the main motive of believing; whereas the latter depends entirely on God's word, and gives him all the glory. Beside,

The testimony of our senses is not half so sure and certain, as that of divine revelation; for our senses are fallible, and may, and do often deceive us: sometimes the organs may be indisposed, and so receive things amiss; sometimes the ob-  
ject

ject may be too remote, and so not discern it aright; sometimes again, the object may be too splendid and glorious, and so dazzle and confound the sight: in all which, and in many other cases, we may not safely rely upon the evidence of sense.

But the word of God is certain and infallible, that is an unerring guide that cannot fail, or lead us amiss; and so we may firmly rest and rely upon the testimony thereof. For which reason St. Paul declares, that we Christians *live by faith, and not by sight*\*; meaning, that we depend more upon revelation than sense. And elsewhere, *We look not to the things that are seen, for they are temporal and uncertain; but we look to the things that are not seen, for they are eternal and abide for ever*†.

But how must our faith be qualified to attain this blessedness? Why,

1. It must be sincere and unfeigned. St. Thomas's faith, though slow, was yet sure and sincere; and so must ours be, not resting in an outward profession, but real, working by love, and appearing in the fruits of righteousness.

2. It must be hearty and affectionate, as his was; moving all the powers and passions of the soul, and making us to cry out with him, *My Lord, and my God*: putting our whole trust and affiance in him.

3. Our faith must be well-assured, and confident; not fluctuating in uncertainties: for a wavering faith will soon fail, and be shaken with every appearance of difficulty.

4. It must be honest, and accompanied with integrity and a good conscience, in discharging

D d 2

all

\* 2 Cor. v. 7.

† Ibid. iv. 18.



all the duties that belong to the place or station wherein God hath set us. And,

Lastly, It must be constant and resolved, not sinking into despondency, or staggering through unbelief, but weathering all the storms of persecution with a fixed and resolute mind, holding out stedfastly unto the end. So did St. Thomas the Saint of this day, who firmly adhered to his Saviour, preaching his resurrection, and propagating his religion with great success among the Indians, till the Brachmans fearing the downfall of their idolatries, privately ran him through with a lance, and thereby brought him to the crown of martyrdom: whose constancy and faith we are exhorted to imitate and follow.

*These and many other signs did Jesus (saith St. John) in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name: which is the great end and design of this day's Gospel.*

Upon the whole then, let us learn from hence to have a firm and unshaken faith in Christ's resurrection; of which though God permitted Thomas to entertain many and great doubts, yet was it chiefly, that by his satisfaction we might the more perfectly believe it without any farther doubt or scruple: and though we cannot now see and feel his wounds, as Thomas did, yet we ought upon the foundation of his incredulity and conviction to build our faith the more strongly in it. And if we truly believe it upon the credit of divine revelation, as it stands confirmed by the doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles, our faith will be more honourable,  
and

and receive a greater reward, than if we saw it with our own eyes. And this we should the rather do, because some sceptics and libertines in our days are fallen into a disbelief and denial of this great article, upon which the whole fabric of the Christian Religion stands; and by that means are led into atheism and an utter forgetfulness of God. Wherefore let us be no longer faithless, but believing, in this great point of Christ's resurrection; so shall we ere long partake of the merits of his death, and the glories of his resurrection: Which God grant, &c.





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On the Nativity of our Lord; or  
Christmas Day.

December 25th.

Two Sermons.

The First by Bishop CONYBEARE.

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LUKE, Chap. ii. Ver. 14.

*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,  
good-will toward men.*

THE words before us contain that hymn, with which the angels celebrated the incarnation of our Blessed Saviour; who, though born of mean parents, and under circumstances of human distress, was yet introduced with singular solemnity—those excellent judges of real dignity proclaiming his appearance with songs of holy praise and joy.

To us therefore, who are now met on this anniversary festival to commemorate that great occurrence, what more proper subject of meditation than the hymn, with which it was first celebrated? For certainly the devotion of angels must supply fit matter for the study and contemplation of Christians.

The words are, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.* These being once explained, I shall, in the progress of my discourse, enlarge on such particulars

culars as are plainly contained in them, or by just inference may be deduced from them.

In order to attain the full meaning of the words, regard must be had to the passages which go before, and the occasion upon which they were delivered; for these frequently impress a sense, which the words, though themselves capable of it, yet, considered apart, may not necessarily require to be given.

To this purpose we should observe, that when the angel appeared to the shepherds, he accosted them in this manner, ver. 10, 11. *Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people:—For unto you is born this day, in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* And then it follows in the 13th verse; *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, &c.* The birth of Christ, or, which amounts to the same, the proclamation of his birth, was the occasion of this devotional hymn; for immediately upon this proclamation, a multitude of the heavenly host praised God in the solemn form which we are now considering.

But, what should move them to such extraordinary joy? Was it merely the birth of Christ? Was it, that the second person in the divine nature condescended so far as to assume the human? This of itself might raise their wonder, as being an event which, without a farther view, they must be unable to account for; but such a wonder seems to have given them juster occasion for self-abasement, than praise and exultation.



Yet, if we look back and consider what the angel declared to the shepherds, *Unto you is born this day, in the City of David, a Saviour*; if we consider, that this was the first thing visibly executed upon earth toward reconciling mankind to God, and the doing that, upon which the salvation of the world must originally depend----we shall see new light breaking in upon us, and such as will discover the propriety of the angels joy, and the true force and meaning of the words before us.

For, upon this foot, that benevolent disposition with which we must conceive these unfallen angels endued, could not but make them rejoice in the prospect of man's salvation, proportionably as the evil being was intent on his destruction. They could not but take a singular pleasure in viewing, though at a distance, an increasing number of fellow-servants of the true God drawn out of those who had been seduced from his service by the malicious artifice of Satan. And as all this was to be gradually accomplished by a variety of means hereafter to be used by Christ in the discharge of his high offices;---as these means were as fully expressive of infinite wisdom, as the end itself was of infinite goodness;---as the whole scheme carried with it an illustration of the noblest divine attributes;---here was most ample ground of praise. And therefore, very fitly did the heavenly host call upon the whole angelic order, saying, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.*

These words, *in the highest*, are not here to be referred to God, as signifying God who dwelleth in the heavens; but should rather be understood

stood of those ministers of his will, who constantly attend him there; and so this first clause calls upon the whole heavenly host to adore and praise God.---It follows, *peace on earth*. This expresses the matter, as well as ground and reason of their praise. By the incarnation of Christ, and what was doing in consequence of his incarnation, *earth, i. e.* mankind, are reconciled; peace is made between God and man; and that displeasure which man's sin occasioned, was now to be done away.----*Good-will toward men*. This seems to be a farther explication of what went before: For, the first step toward divine favour is the removal of divine displeasure: this being removed, and peace procured, the way is opened for every other following grace; for spiritual support and assistance in this life, and everlasting happiness and glory in the next.

Having thus far opened the words, I shall pursue the intent of them under the following heads:

I. The incarnation of Christ being designed for the salvation of mankind, was a signal instance of divine condescension and favour.

II. The following conduct and administration of Christ did fully accomplish the great end designed by his incarnation.

III. The proposing this end, and bringing it to accomplishment by such extraordinary means, was not only a ground of the utmost gratitude on man's part, but of joy and praise even in the angels themselves; as being the brightest manifestation of the divine attributes, and, consequently, in the properest sense of the expression, of the divine glory itself.

I. First



I. First then, the incarnation of Christ, being designed for the salvation of mankind, was a signal instance of divine condescension and favour.

All men have sinned. Even our first parents continued but a short time in a state of innocence. They fell by the first temptation; and, having corrupted their nature, derived it down with the same sinful pollution to their posterity. Hence we bring with us into the world the first seeds of iniquity, which not being sufficiently checked in the beginning---and perhaps encouraged by a variety of circumstances, to which human life is subject, have grown and improved vastly, and brought forth a plentiful harvest of actual sin. The very best have fallen far short of perfection in moral duty: the careless have insensibly run themselves into difficulties beyond the mastery of their virtuous principles: and the profligate, having abandoned every thing good, have embraced all opportunities of sinning with greediness. Such was the state and condition of the world when Christ came to save us!

In consequence of this, man, the highest, and once the most favoured part of the visible creation, could not be viewed by the eye of purity with approbation. He was strictly *fallen from grace*; i.e. from all right and title to grace. His actions, his temper, his very constitution, being in many respects wrong, he became not only disqualified for that happiness to which he was originally designed, but the proper object of that misery which is the consequence of divine displeasure.

Out of this wretched state no power of his own could redeem him: for, if something  
might

might be done to prevent his growing worse, and running the utmost lengths of impiety, yet this does by no means amount to a proper recovery from sin : it might stop, in some measure, the overflowing of ungodliness, but could not remove the cause. That lay deeply rooted in human nature;---and therefore could not be removed by human skill or care.

Or, if it should be said, that repentance would cure all---pray, what did this repentance amount to? Was it any more than a sorrowful reflection on past iniquity, incapable of being recalled?--- Perhaps you will say more: perhaps you will say, it implied a resolution of future amendment, and a new course of perfect obedience. But, were such excellent resolutions ever made? ---or, if made, were they ever effectual? Did not even their firmest resolutions frequently fail them? So that in their best state, they seemed rather advancing slowly toward perfection, than having already attained unto it.

And indeed, of this a good reason may be given. For they could not change their nature. This was itself corrupt: As such, though capable of being controuled, in some measure, by care and discipline, yet it could not be absolutely cured: it would break forth, and shew itself frequently; and by this means, abate much of the excellency of those services, which were well intended at first, and sincerely pursued afterward. This repentance therefore was, and could not but be, in a great degree imperfect.

Beyond this, there is another thing still behind. Let us suppose such a repentance complete, and the person repenting to have gained such a perfect mastery of sin, as to avoid it entirely



tirely for the future; yet, could this, of itself, make amends for past transgression? Repentance supposes something wrong committed, which a man reflects upon with shame and sorrow: but, doth this shame, this sorrow, or even the avoiding of sin in future time, undo what it supposes to have been done? or make a man really innocent, who is really guilty? or destroy entirely the ill effects of former transgression? If it cannot do any of these, what security can it give us of pardon? and how can it, by its own mere force, restore us to that favour which was forfeited by former sin?

We see then, in such a condition as this, three things were necessary to be done, in order to man's relief.

1. A reconciliation must be obtained between God and Man: *i. e.* something must be done in order to avert that displeasure which sin had caused; and to procure us acceptance with God, notwithstanding our past transgressions.

2. Some new favourable terms of abatement must be procured: the original law of obedience, absolutely perfect, must be cancelled; and *the doing the best we can*, be admitted in lieu of the rigorous discharge of duty.

3. Some farther motives must be suggested, and aids obtained, in order to bend the will to duty, and to forward the attainment of that perfection, which we are sincerely labouring to attain. But, none of these could be sufficiently assured on the mere principles of human reason.

We do not indeed, nor ought we to deny, but that men in former times, and even before the incarnation of Christ, did hope the best, upon doing the best they could: and to this  
they

they were led, from considering the infinite goodness and mercy of God. They knew he would do all that goodness and mercy required to be done : but were at a loss, and unable to determine certainly, “ How far it was fit that “ sin should be pardoned at all : ” — Whether, to pardon it, could be made reconcileable with several divine attributes ; whether the unerring purity of the divine nature could any more approve the sinner, than the sin ; and whether inflexible justice could forbear to punish those who in strictness deserved to suffer.

Whilst men laboured under these doubts, which much qualified and abated every comfortable hope, God was pleased to shew himself ; and, by the great occurrence of this day, not merely to enliven their hope, but to improve it even into certainty. For, hear the message of the angel to the shepherds ! *Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people ; --- for, unto you is born this day, in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* See here the remedy of all their spiritual evils,—the supply of all their most important wants,—the gratification of their boldest, but virtuous wishes,---and the completion, I may say more than completion, of their hopes. In this single word [Saviour] every thing now hinted at, is contained ; because it carries in it a redemption from sin,—a security of pardon,—and, in consequence of that, an earnest of future happiness, if we perform the conditions on which that happiness is suspended.

This great work of our salvation was begun by the incarnation of our Blessed Lord ; promised, but darkly, to our first parents ;—after-



ward typified to us by many particulars in the Jewish law; and then more distinctly foretold and unfolded by the Prophets. Hence, at the time when our Blessed Lord appeared, a Saviour was by the Jews as surely expected, as earnestly wished for. Even the Heathens, though but imperfectly taught, yet, conscious of their own wants, desired him. Happy had it been, if both the one and the other had known him when come, and had received him when offered with that respect which the dignity of his person required, and the importance of the great work which he came to finish, deserved!

But, I return from this reflection: for we are not here to consider the reception, but the incarnation and birth of Christ; which being designed for the salvation of mankind, was a most signal instance of divine condescension and favour. This is my point, and to this I desire to confine myself.

But, is there any need to prove or to illustrate it beyond what the bare proposal of the point suggests? If the great Governor of the World, who was likewise the author of our beings, had been justly offended with us;---and we, instead of taking any steps toward regaining his favour, (which was the case of the greatest part of mankind) were still going on to provoke him farther by our impieties; --- if, whilst men were doing all this, he himself stepped in for our relief, can we doubt his condescension in stooping to us, or can we be insensible of the favour?

It had been merciful in the Supreme Being to hearken to any terms, solicited on our part;---to overlook, on any conditions, our past transgressions against him; and to receive us even  
upon

upon our meditated return to him. But, to invite us himself; to employ his own infinite wisdom in forming a scheme, which should reconcile his acceptance of us with his several attributes; to send his own beloved Son into the world to execute this scheme, and to do for his enemies as much at least as the best and fondest man had ever yet done for his friend, is what deserves at once both our praise and wonder!

Still, the merciful condescension of God will appear in a stronger light, when we consider, that in order to this peace, this reconciliation, it was necessary, that the second person in the divine nature should be incarnate, and become man, by an intimate union of the divine substance with the human. An event this, so very extraordinary, that some have had the boldness to dispute its very possibility: in this especially erring, that they measured the divine power not (as they ought) by the real consistency of things, but by their own narrow conceptions; which low way of proceeding, if carried to its full length, would lead them to dispute many other things, of which they themselves are most intimately conscious. Thus much, however, we may with modesty affirm, that the distance between the divine nature and the human being infinite, a personal union of them would be to us incredible, were it not evidenced by that which is superior to all other proof, — I mean divine testimony itself. Here then we fix our hold, — assuring ourselves, that this event (astonishing as it must appear) is real; and with all humility of devotion lifting up our hearts to God, and saying, *Lord, what is man that thou hast*



*hast shewn such respect unto him; or the son of man, that thou didst thus vouchsafe to visit him!*

II. I pass on to the second head proposed, viz. to shew, That the following conduct and administration of Christ did fully accomplish the great end designed by his incarnation.

Divines, in treating concerning the conduct of our Blessed Lord, have considered him as sustaining three great offices; viz. those of Prophet, Priest, and King; under one or other of which, the whole of his administration may be properly reduced. I shall therefore pursue this method,—yet with this small difference, that whereas other writers have followed the order of time, in which our Blessed Lord executed these offices, I shall chuse rather the order of nature: and therefore, though our Saviour began, in fact, with teaching, as preparatory to what was to follow after,—and in this executed his prophetic office,—yet, as in order of conception, a ground of reconciliation must be supposed before any farther advances can be made, so I shall consider, in the first place, his execution of the priestly office. And in this I am farther justified by the proceeding of John the Baptist, who opened the way to Christ by publicly preaching repentance and forgiveness\*.

As a priest therefore, he was to make atonement; not such an one as had been offered in former times (for sacrifices of that kind could *make no man perfect*†) but such as was valuable and effectual of itself—such as had no farther reference;—and such as being perfectly adequate to the sins atoned for, should render complete

\* Mark i. 4.

† Heb. x. 1.

plete satisfaction at once, and never need to be repeated.

Here some man perhaps may say, "God cannot be injured. He is above our reach. And as nothing on our part can impair his happiness, so nothing can possibly increase it. A satisfaction therefore must, in this respect, be needless."

But, by satisfaction, do we mean a reparation of hurt properly done to God? This we disclaim on the principle just now mentioned, that no actions, on our part, can possibly impair his happiness.

The real state of the case is this: By sin we had broken in upon, and disordered the constitution originally fixed by God, and on which depended not only the manifestation of his glorious attributes, but the real good and interest of the whole. This evil must, some way or other, be repaired; the reparation of which we call satisfaction, as being that which could alone satisfy the demands of God on us, and dispose him to be reconciled to us.

But then a question will arise, how could such a reparation be made? How could the effects of sin upon the moral constitution be removed, and the divine authority over intelligent beings sufficiently vindicated? Here unassisted man was at a loss; and the work required a skill and interposition properly divine.

To this purpose, Christ was born. The second person in the divine nature was incarnate, and by his incarnation became as perfectly man, as he was perfectly God before. The same person being thus perfectly God and Man, was, by the human nature, capable of suffering, to



which its union with the divine gave an infinite value and importance. On this foot, the sacrifice of Christ for sin, when, in the execution of his priestly office, he offered himself upon the cross, was evidence of its vast heinousness and demerit,---of the great displeasure which God justly conceived against it,---of the dignity of the divine law, and the inviolable authority of the law-giver. In consequence of all this, it became effectual. For though it did not make sin to be no sin,---nor that to be not committed which really had been committed,---yet, by removing these effects of sin, whereby it brought a contempt on the divine law, all is done which could be done to bring matters back to their original state. This may very fitly be called reparation; and such reparation is, in no improper sense of the word, satisfaction.

Let us consider the case of the fallen angels; who having presumptuously sinned, have found no deliverance, but are consigned to eternal punishment. This had its end, no doubt. But, if it be demanded, what that end could be? The answer cannot allege any good arising to the sufferers; for, since their pains are without remedy, they must, in respect to them, be evil. And yet some good there must arise, or else the all-wise Being could not possibly inflict them. It cannot be good in respect to God himself; for, being perfectly sufficient and independent, he is incapable of receiving the least addition to his happiness from any thing which others enjoy or suffer. It remains, that the good intended must respect some other intelligent beings; which having as yet maintained their innocence, do perhaps continue fixed in that state by the knowledge

knowledge of what others suffer, and shall for ever suffer for their crimes. Such objects, presented to their minds, affect them much more than even the beauty of virtue does: they shew the importance of obedience in the strongest light; and, by preventing in others a like defection from virtue, they stop the contagion of vicious example,---and give law that authority and force, which it had when made at first, and which ought to be preserved for ever. In this way the fallen angels, being ensamples, may be the means of keeping others of their own order in a state of eternal innocence and happiness.

The case is somewhat different in regard to men: for, whereas the former sinned under the strongest light, and the greatest advantages toward preserving their virtue,---man was first seduced by the malicious artifice of Satan. On this account his state was pitiable; and the All-gracious Being looked upon it with an eye of compassion. In strictness, however, man might have suffered; and indeed he must have done so, had not a wise expedient been used to promote, in an higher degree, the end of punishment, than it could be promoted by the personal sufferings of the offenders.

For, had man been condemned to eternal misery, the end to be obtained thereby could not be greater, than that which is promoted by the punishment of the fallen angels. It could conduce only to preserve others,---perhaps the inhabitants of other systems chiefly, in their obedience. But is not this more effectually done by the Christian scheme of redemption? Is not the justice and severity of God more fully manifested, by his punishing, in his own Son, our



crimes, when this Son, by personating mankind, took their whole punishment on himself? Could any one be with-held from sinning by the mere sufferings of men on that account, who is not with-held more strongly by this most affecting consideration? But if this be so, then more is done in the way before us, than could have been effected by the ruin of our race, and making them the eternal monuments of vengeance.

Beyond this, it deserves our attention, that if mankind had been condemned to eternal suffering, they must likewise have proved eternal sinners; and however, by being made examples to others, they might have kept them in the ways of duty, yet they themselves would have gone on forever in their crimes: for, despair of forgiveness must have prevented every degree of reformation. But now, in the present scheme, care is not only taken to secure the interests of those who never fell, and to repair the authority of law, in regard to them,---but to give it a force even in reference to those, who, by their disobedience, had contributed to destroy its force. It is the design of God to bring them back; to rescue them from the influence of the evil Being; to subdue gradually their corruptions; and, in the end, to establish them in a perfection of the moral state. When this is done, (and this great end is now hastening on to its accomplishment, by the means which our Blessed Lord hath prescribed) then the effects of sin will be destroyed; then the whole dignity of law will be restored; and that which ought to be the inviolable rule of action, be observed for ever.

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The next thing, according to the order of nature, to be considered, is the execution of Christ's prophetic office.

It hath been noted already, that sin was brought into the world by the fall of our first parents; from whom there is derived down to us a depraved and corrupted nature. Hence both our intellectual and moral powers have been greatly impaired; and as, in many instances, we know not what we ought to do; in others, where ignorance may not be pleaded, there is a remarkable backwardness, and even perverseness, in the will. These evils must be remedied in some degree: otherwise no advantage can be made of the pardon, which God, for Christ's sake, offers. For it is unreasonable to expect that this should extend to any, but those who embrace it by a religious return to God.

To prepare men therefore to receive and be the better for that peace, which, by his future sacrifice, our Blessed Lord was about to purchase, he began his ministry with discharging the part of a divine instructor. He called men to repentance; and to shew them what this repentance imported, he pointed out the several duties they had violated: not indeed in the way which some nice philosophers might, perhaps, expect;---not in the form of system, in which every thing is orderly disposed; but in a way more suitable to the capacities of vulgar disciples: he did it occasionally, and as ordinary occurrences furnished him with opportunities to inculcate them with most advantage. Upon which account, though the vain and self-conceited might disrelish his method, yet Scripture



informs us, that *the common people heard him gladly* \*.

In this way he taught them duties, which he enforced not merely as rules of convenience, by the breach of which, some mischief must arise to our temporal interests,—but as the express will of God himself;—as eternal laws, to which they were indispensably bound; by the violation of which, they had already incurred divine displeasure; and by the future observance of which, they would as certainly regain God's favour. He did not indeed disdain the aids which philosophy and natural reason might furnish out for the service of religion: these may be useful to men of capacity and leisure; and are never so well employed, as when directed to this service. But on considerations of that kind he dwelt more sparingly; chusing rather to insist on the great point of divine will, by him declared, as a foundation in itself more firm, and an argument more level to the apprehensions of every hearer.

But though he did not make all the use which some think might be made of philosophical principles, yet he did what was much better, and which philosophy could never do: he taught men doctrines which human reason could not teach, and which had an especial influence on practice. These come in as new aids for the service of religion, and distinguish the Christian from every other religious system: these make it properly his; because taught by no one else before him.

There are other matters indeed, which, tho' taught before, are yet strongly insisted on by our Blessed Lord; and made by him so much the more

\* Mark xii. 37.

more useful, as they have been rendered by him so much the more certain. Such are the great sanctions of virtue and religion; I mean, future reward and punishment: Of which, whilst some men expressed themselves doubtfully, they lost a great deal of their advantage; and whilst others only hoped or feared them, without such assurance as could put an end to every reasonable doubt, their apprehensions contributed rather to amuse or to disquiet men, than to become ruling principles of action. But our Blessed Lord, by *bringing life and immortality to light through the Gospel*\*, and by opening to men the great future scene of things, (which will be varied in proportion to their behaviour in this life) hath given force to laws which was never felt before: and whilst men attend to this, they must see the vanity of every vicious temptation. Such was the effect which our Blessed Lord's teaching had on his first disciples. The great concerns of another world, in so lively a manner impressed upon them, made them disregard all the terrors or allurements of this life; and with the truest greatness of mind to maintain their religion, notwithstanding the loss of all that was reckoned valuable, and the suffering of all that was esteemed terrible. If, in course of time, men have abated much of this religious fervour, it is not owing to their improvement, but their degeneracy. They have attended less to these important motives, which would otherwise have influenced them, as they did the more early professors of the Gospel. But keeping at a less distance from temptations, and being, of consequence, more open to the force of them, they have almost forgotten what our Blessed Saviour

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taught;

\* 2 Tim. i. 10.



taught; and so have failed of the great end intended by him; not through the inefficacy of the methods proposed, but their own backwardness to make a right use of them. Yet, whence-soever this comes to pass, whether thro' the folly of inattention, or a resolute obstinacy in sin, the motives themselves are great and weighty, and such as became a divine teacher to enforce.

I have suggested before, that by the corruption of our nature the will hath received an unhappy tendency to vice. As, to overpower this, greater evidence is given than men ever enjoyed before, of future reward and punishment: so, to draw them gently the right way, we have the most consummate example of virtue set us, in the person of him, who came to teach the rules of it. Our Blessed Lord says, *he came to fulfil the law* \*; that is, not only to accomplish the prophecies concerning him, and to answer all the typical representations of him, but likewise to discharge every part of moral righteousness; which end he pursued with so much care and zeal, as gave life to the rules he prescribed, and shewed, that virtue is in itself both practicable and lovely.

A difference there was, and that vastly great, between the case of our Blessed Lord and ours. He, as to his human nature, was perfectly innocent, and free from all that bias to sin, which the best men experience in themselves. On this account the unerring practice of righteousness was to him easy, though to us, in our present infirm state, impossible: for, the Apostle tells us, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* †. What therefore

\* Matt. v. 17.

† 1 John i. 8.

therefore can be done in this case? For though instruction may make our duty clearer,—though motives may enforce it more strongly,—and good example may render us less excusable, whilst we refuse to follow it,—yet if all these cannot make us righteous, and if perfect righteousness be indispensably required, then Christ lived and died in vain.

To obviate this difficulty, our Blessed Lord hath taught us this most comfortable doctrine, that God will abate in the rigorous demands of justice; and, whilst we *believe and trust in Christ*, and do the best we can, will graciously accept our sincerity, in lieu of the most perfect obedience. Laws indeed must be strict, and cannot dispense with themselves: but the law-giver, upon sufficient reasons, may abate: and a good law-giver will be apt to consider rather what may be hoped for in those subjected to him, than what might, upon the whole, be wished for. Agreeably to this, the terms of acceptance, as published by our Blessed Lord, are mercifully accommodated to the present state of things; in which, being unable at once to get the entire mastery of our passions, we shall yet please God by our most thorough endeavours of doing so. Our state in this life must be continually progressive,—conquering, and going on to conquer; till at length, when our passions are, as to the main, subdued,—when virtue shall become the reigning principle,—and our errors in action rather prove some abatement in excellency, than deserve to be esteemed heinous,—then will God receive us to himself; and as the reward of what we have so well begun, and hitherto so successfully carried on, place us beyond



yond the danger of falling back again. This will be that beginning of heaven, on which we shall enter as soon as we quit this life; when, approved and loved of God, and dwelling in his more immediate presence, we shall still go on to improve farther; continually rising, as in perfection, so likewise in happiness, without bounds either of duration or of degree.

There is yet to be observed, that in carrying on the work of our salvation, our Blessed Lord hath not only sustained the offices of Priest, and Prophet, but that likewise of King; the importance of which, to the end designed, I am now to shew distinctly.

It hath been already noted, that, in order to qualify us to receive, and make advantage of, the pardon offered, duty hath been explained; important doctrines taught; the sanctions of virtue enlarged and ascertained; a perfect example exhibited; and the terms of acceptance adapted to the present capacities of human nature. Yet still, this is not all which our Blessed Lord hath been pleased to do for us: he hath vouchsafed to take us under his own government and protection; and, by becoming our head, to lead us on, whilst we follow his unerring guidance, to sure victory and triumph.

To this purpose he laid the foundation of a regular society, of which he himself is the supreme, though invisible, Governor: into this society all persons were to be admitted by baptism; persons of every nation, so admitted, were to consider themselves as fellow-members of Christ. Under him, the Apostles were the first ministers in this spiritual kingdom; being appointed to admit,—to teach,—to exhort,—to  
reprove,

reprove,—to censure,—to exclude; and, in short, to do every office agreeably to his directions, and in subordination to his authority, which may serve either to maintain, or to edify this society. Under these were other inferior officers likewise constituted, if not by Christ himself, yet by the Apostles at least,—who had their proper share of power, to be exercised for the sole good and benefit of the Church. The administration of these persons, whilst acting rightly, and within their proper bounds, is the administration of Christ: their teaching is his: their exhortations, or reproofs, are his: their sentence of absolution or condemnation, when rightly pronounced, is confirmed by him: and, in this sense, *he that heareth them, heareth Christ.*

But, a more illustrious instance of regal power, was, his sending the Holy Ghost, the Comforter; who, agreeable to his promise, was to supply his absence. By his miraculous operation, the first preachers of the Gospel were enabled to speak in languages they never learned,—to inculcate doctrines not only beyond human discovery, but comprehension,—and to confirm their truth by miracles, above the power of any visible agents to produce. By these means the careless were made attentive,—the infidels were converted,—the believing were confirmed,—and the desponding were inspirited: so that, within a small compass of time, Christianity was spread through most parts of the then known world: the professors of it, supported in this manner, and farther assisted in the ways I am going to mention, generally living up to the  
rules



rules of their profession, and becoming as lights amidst a crooked and perverse generation.

These then were the extraordinary operations of the Holy Spirit; which, though more surprising, were not more serviceable to the cause of virtue, than those others which we term ordinary and common. These latter are distinguished likewise from those I have already mentioned by a remarkable circumstance; that whereas the one, being principally intended for the propagation of the Gospel, were confined to the more early ages, the other, being of perpetual use, are still continued to the Church. And thus hath been accomplished the prediction of our Blessed Lord, that *the Comforter shall abide with us for ever*\*.

These ordinary operations of the Blessed Spirit respect either the ministers of Christ's spiritual kingdom,—or else the several members of it in their personal capacities. The former are by his secret influences assisted in discovering God's will themselves,—in the imparting the discoveries thus made,—in enforcing his commands,—in awakening the drowsy,—in encouraging the slothful,—in holding back those who are running into the commission of sin; and, lastly, in reducing such, as, through error or perverseness, have strayed from the ways of righteousness: in a word, efficacy is hereby given to all their just administrations: for the Apostle tells us, that *Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but it is God only who giveth the increase*†.

In regard to the several members of Christ's church in their personal capacities, the influences of

\* John xiv. 19.

† 1 Cor. iii. 6.

of the Holy Spirit are still more important, because more general. They extend to every thought, and word, and action. By these, good sentiments are suggested,—the backward will inclined,—virtuous resolutions confirmed,—courage in opposing difficulties and dangers inspired,—the force of temptations abated,—and the man throughout so perfectly strengthened, as to be able to go through with honour. Hence the laws declared by Christ come gradually to have their effect; the corruption first introduced into human nature by the artifice of Satan, and folly of our first parents, wears off,—its original virtuous disposition is restored; and man, on whom God could not look with approbation in his polluted state, becomes the worthy object of his favour.

When these ends are attained, and the number of the elect accomplished, then shall follow that most glorious display of power with which the regal authority of Christ shall be concluded: for, then cometh the end, when *the dead, which are in their graves, shall hear his voice, and shall come forth* \*; and the Almighty Judge render to every man according to his works. Death, the last enemy, being thus destroyed, and all things in this manner put under Christ's feet, his regal kingdom, having attained the ends for which it was instituted, shall cease: the power which he before held, as a mediatorial King, be given up, and *God shall be all in all* †.

Then the grand scene shall open; into which, if we may dare hope to penetrate at this distance, we may imagine with what rapturous joy the blessed shall look back upon their deliverance.

Indeed,

\* John v. 28.

† 1 Cor. xv. 24—28.



Indeed, when the good man first leaves this world, his fate is in itself fixed, and he enters, in some sort, into his master's joy. But, as the state of separation between soul and body is an imperfect state, so the happiness to be then enjoyed will be proportionable; and perhaps consist chiefly in thoughtful anticipation of what shall really be enjoyed hereafter. But, when the last sentence of absolution shall be pronounced, then all the glories of heaven shall be revealed; then God himself shall be seen as he is, and every worthy desire be gratified. The understanding, now clouded with ignorance, shall be opened to discern the beauties which were before concealed from it; the will, at present wandering between right and wrong, be eternally determined to the best; and the affections, which in this life are so apt to be misplaced, shall be for ever fixed on an object supremely excellent and lovely; from all which must result such agreeable wonder,—such steady complacency, and such entire delight, as exceeds by far the utmost stretch of our conceptions. Here then must we stop, because nothing farther can be said or thought of.

III. I shall now hasten to the last head mentioned, viz. that the proposing this end, and bringing it to accomplishment by such extraordinary means, is not only a ground of the utmost gratitude on man's part, but of joy and praise even in the angels themselves.

When I speak of gratitude on man's part, I mean it principally in relation to the present life, and with a special eye to the solemnity of this happy festival. For, as to the blessed above, they need be urged by no arguments; since they  
must

must be strongly determined this way by their own rectitude of mind, and most intimate consciousness of the importance of salvation. They feel their happiness; on which as they reflect with joy, so they must at the same time look up with thankfulness to the author of it. And as the sense of their enjoyments must inspire gratitude, so this, in its turn, will serve to heighten their enjoyments.

The case is different with regard to men on this side the grave. Having the end only in view, and that perhaps at a considerable distance, — and a thousand idle amusements interrupting them, and drawing off their attention from it, they need to be reminded of what is in itself clear, and urged to discharge what is in itself excellent and engaging. I have observed just before, that the blessed in heaven, feeling their own happiness, are from thence determined to grateful sentiments, as the immediate consequence of such happiness. At present, we are in pursuit of what they enjoy. And therefore, in order to raise like sentiments in us, what is thus distant must be brought home;—must by faith be embraced, and by meditation rendered familiar to us.

I have, in the former part of this discourse, represented the miserable state, in which men were before the coming of Christ, and in which they must have continued still, had Christ never come to save us. I have explained, in such manner as a discourse of this sort will admit, the Christian scheme of salvation, and what our Blessed Lord hath done under each of his several offices, in order to promote it; carrying your thoughts on to the consummation of things, and  
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the opening of the last grand scene. Farther we are unable to go at present, and farther, I hope, we need not; for if these matters are but duly attended to, the effect of such attention must be certain; since, if we are thoroughly persuaded of the infinite love of Christ toward us, and the infinite importance of what he hath done for us, we can no more cease to love and thank him, whilst we think on these things, than we could cease to do so, if put in possession of the happiness we now hope for.

Sensible of this, the Church hath appointed the annual solemnity of this day, on which especially to recollect our thoughts, and fix our attention on this subject. An institution so fit, so reasonable, so pious, one might think could have met with no opposition from any, who called themselves Christians, especially such as affected to be thought the only good Christians. Be it, that we are unable to determine precisely the day on which our Blessed Lord was born: can that be thought a reason why no day should be observed in memory of his birth? Be it, that some persons have abused this festival to purposes of intemperance: must it therefore be turned into a fast? Or, supposing that the Church of Rome hath practised many superstitions, in their undue celebration of this day: shall others therefore go into a superstition on the opposite side, and religiously abstain from any celebration of it at all? A wise and serious person would think, that if others, through indiscretion, or vicious temper, have abused this solemnity, he, for his part, is the more concerned to restore it to its proper use; and, by an exemplary conduct  
on

on this occasion, both to express his own gratitude, and to edify the church of Christ.

There is still another thing behind, which must not be overlooked, because the words of my text directly lead me to consider it; I mean, that the proposing the salvation of mankind, and bringing it to accomplishment, by the administration of Christ, is ground of praise and joy even in the angels themselves.

With regard to man, this point is clear enough, because his supreme interests are concerned in it: but, in reference to the angels, it may be said, however the greatness of the end, and wisdom of the contrivance may excite their admiration, yet there does not seem to be sufficient ground for that praise, which is accompanied likewise with joy. It may be said, that these are beings already fixed in a state of happiness; and being raised so many degrees above us, must therefore be independent on us; on which account, as our concerns have no relation to theirs, so nothing which happens to us, can properly affect them.

But, can we suppose, that these excellent beings are so entirely wrapt up in themselves, as to have no regard to any thing which others enjoy, or suffer? Can we suppose they have no principle of goodness,—not even in the least degree? which principle, in whatever creature it subsists, must be attended with all its kindred passions; and imply a desire of good to others,—a joy when that good is procured,—and a continued satisfaction, whilst that good continues to be enjoyed. So that on this foot, the projecting and executing such a scheme for the salvation of mankind, must become matter of joy



to them, unless we suppose they are void of that principle, by which they continue in the state they are in; I mean that of happy angels. And, agreeably to this, the Scripture represents them as *ministering* to mankind in the affairs of *salvation* \*, and *rejoicing over every sinner which repenteth* †.

However, the main point I shall insist on here is this, that our salvation is the ground of praise even to the angels, because the whole scheme, taken together, is a noble manifestation of the divine attributes.

If goodness be supposed the original principle, by which the Supreme Being was induced to create man, this is manifested in an higher degree, by the care taken of his salvation; by pointing out the end; by conducting him in the way to it; and by urging him on to the attainment of it, by every method of tenderness.

If man, seduced by the temptations of the Devil, had disobeyed the commands of his Creator, and was going on to aggravate his crimes, by repeated instances of impiety, surely it was no ordinary mercy to hold him back, when precipitating his ruin; not barely to accept terms of peace, but to offer them; and even to invite his own rebellious subjects to return.

If persons, thus offending, did really deserve to suffer; and violated law did, on the score of governing justice, require reparation;—justice is, in this scheme, satisfied to the full, such reparation being sufficiently made by the sufferings of our Blessed Lord: and so the great difficulty which may be thought to arise from an  
appearing

\* Heb. i. 14.

† Luke xv. 10.

appearing inconsistency between justice and mercy, is entirely avoided.

If sinners, whilst they continue such, and wilfully offend, are unfit objects of favour, and the divine purity cannot possibly approve the criminal;—this same perfection is manifested to great advantage, by promoting the real interests of virtue; by the precepts, the motives, and sanctions of the Gospel; and by those farther influences of the Holy Spirit, which gradually lead men on to perfection in moral goodness.

If chusing the most noble end, and pursuing that end by the most suitable means, especially where such means are various, remote, and intricate; if to do these be instances of most consummate wisdom; then see in the Christian scheme a full display of it! in which the eternal salvation of mankind is proposed,—the hindrances in the way to it removed,—the methods for attaining it pointed out,—and every thing done to incite, to encourage, and to support men, which the most thorough view of the whole state of things could suggest.

I shall add one attribute more, because it comes in to the aid of all the rest;—I mean, power; without the exercise of which, several other attributes could have no effect. For, what is goodness, without an ability to execute its purposes? What is mercy, if there is no restraining the hand which is lifted up for vengeance? What is even justice itself, without a power to do every thing which justice either requires, or admits of? What is purity, without a capacity to promote its interests? And what is wisdom, but an ineffectual director, if there be no energy to enforce its dictates, and



bring its most noble designs to their event? Agreeably to this, we see, that in the whole conduct of this affair, there were the most illustrious displays of power; of such as exceeded all created nature, even the power of that malicious being, who, belonging perhaps to an order next to God, had the vanity to act as God; and was disposed to hinder, if possible, his operations. But vain were all such efforts: Christ, though cruelly put to death, rose again. His religion was spread in spite of opposition: it still prevails, notwithstanding the utmost endeavours to hinder it: and will still go on to prevail farther, till all enemies shall be subdued; and death, the last enemy of mankind, shall be destroyed.

And now, upon the review, can we doubt whether this be matter of just praise to the angels? Can we doubt whether beings of consummate intellectual capacities can be pleased with contemplating the most proper objects of the understanding, the manifestations of divine excellencies?—or, being pleased, can do other than celebrate God's praises, for these manifestations?

I would beg to know, what is properly the object in God of praise, but that which is properly his glory? And does not the glory of God consist in the manifestation of his perfections? What is it, but this, which is the motive to all his external actions? The original ground must be within himself, though the effect may reach much farther; in the manifestation of which perfections, though the benefit may especially respect *some*, yet the excellency displayed will, in a great degree, concern *all*. I shall not therefore

fore doubt to affirm, that as the angels are the highest order of intelligent beings;—and as some of the highest pleasures arise from the employment of the understanding on the most excellent objects;—so their contemplation of God's excellencies may be one ground, even of their own happiness: and if such, it must likewise proportionably be a proper foundation of their praise. No one can think but the display of God's perfections, of whatever kind they are, and on whatever object they are terminated, must be matter of delightful consideration to all rightly disposed intelligences. But this will hold especially with regard to angels, whose most proper employment it is to contemplate, and to praise God.

To bring the matter more home to ourselves. We shall find it one great article of our own happiness hereafter, to examine, and penetrate thoroughly into this wonderful and most amazing scheme; to see all the harmony and correspondence of its parts; their joint subserviency to one grand end; and all, both separately and in conjunction, setting forth the glory of God. We shall be captivated by the engaging subject; and holding it fast for ever, make it the eternal matter of our praise. *Amen.*



## On Christmas Day.

A second Sermon.

By Bishop ATTERBURY.

St. MATTH. Chap. xi. Ver. 6.

*Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended  
in me.*

AND can any man then be offended in thee, blessed Jesu! who hast undertaken, and done, and suffered, so much for all men! who willingly emptiedst thyself of all thy glory, leftest heaven and the bosom of thy Father, for our sakes; and, when thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, didst not (as at this time) abhor the virgin's womb! Can a design of so much goodness ever miscarry by the folly of those, on whose very account it was undertaken! Can such a message of love (of a love astonishing and infinite) be rejected!—Canst thou thyself, the great messenger, be received any otherwise, than with the open arms and hearts of all thy creatures, for whose redemption thou wert thus made flesh, and dweltst among us!—Is it possible for any one of them to be any ways offended in thee!

Yet so it is, blessed Lord! that from thy first coming in the flesh to this time, there have been unreasonable men all along, that have taken

offence at thee!—And there will not fail to be such within the pale of Christianity itself, even till thy second coming to judge the world.—Thy doctrines have been complained of, as laying too great a restraint on human nature, as hard and unpracticable sayings!—Thy mysteries have been doubted of, disputed against, and ridiculed, by men of perverse and proud minds, who are resolved to believe nothing farther than they can thoroughly and clearly comprehend it!—Thy person itself, the circumstances and way of thy coming, have been an offence unto many!—*To the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness*\*! a constant occasion of falling to all godless and sinful men, whose high minds are not brought into captivity to the obedience of faith, nor made fit for the reception of the truth, as it is in Jesus!—But blessed are all they (have thy holy lips pronounced) who, in none of these ways, are offended in thee!

As to the two former ways of being offended in Christ, on the account of the difficulty of practising those duties he has enjoined, and believing those articles of faith he hath proposed, I shall not at present enter into the consideration of them. The festival we are now celebrating, determines me rather to point my reflections on the offence which has been taken at the person of Christ, the method and manner of his coming among us. The objections of which kind I shall briefly propose, and answer; that so having rooted and grounded ourselves in a firm belief of the doctrine, we may, with the more assurance, make those several improve-

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\* 1 Cor. i. 23.



ments of it, which will be profitable unto godliness.

It hath formerly by Porphyry and Celsus, and ever since by their successors, the open or hidden enemies of Christianity, been thus argued :

That the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God is unreasonable and incredible ; inconsistent with the clear notions we have of the unlimited perfections of God, and the finite properties of man ; between which there is so wide and eternal a difference, as seems to render them incapable of being joined together in one and the same person or subject. For how can wisdom, perfection, and happiness itself, be mixed with folly, infirmity, and misery ? What union can there be between what is finite, and that which is infinite ?

But were it conceivable, how the divine and human nature could be united into one person ; yet is it not (say they) reasonable to believe that such a method was actually taken ? For surely there were other ways, beside this, of restoring lapsed man to the favour of God, and that happiness which he had forfeited, and of taking away the sins of the world : the unlimited mercy of the divine nature was of itself sufficient to compass this end, and forgive this debt, without requiring any ransom ; and unless a God incarnate were absolutely and indispensibly requisite to free mankind from the guilt and dominion of their sins, it is no way reasonable to think, that recourse was had to so extraordinary a remedy.

Now, as to the first part of the objection, the impossibility of an union between God and man

in the same person or subject, it is a bold, and a presumptuous plea. For who is he, among the reasoners of this world, that is able precisely to determine, in such obscure points as these, what is possible or impossible to be accomplished by almighty wisdom and power? Are our notions of these two beings, God and man, so full every way, and distinct and clear, as to satisfy us, that such an union is in itself repugnant, and altogether impossible? Would we impartially consider, what passes within our minds, when we employ them in such nice disquisitions as these, we should find, that all that passes there is darkness and confusion; and that we can discern too little of either of these natures, to be able to pronounce, with any assurance, that it is impossible for them to be joined together in one person.

We have no just idea indeed of the manner in which such an union may be effected; but so neither have we of the manner of that union which is between our souls and bodies. An union, which we can as little explain, or comprehend, as even that of the Deity with the humanity; and which yet we can no more doubt of, than we can of our own being and subsistence. Will the most keen and piercing wit among the sons of men say, that he perceives plainly, how a corporeal can be joined to an incorporeal being; and what are those common ties and ligaments that hold them: how they act upon each other; move, and are moved by turns; and what kind of contact that is, by which such motions are mutually communicated? No; these are secrets, which we can no way, by any strength of thought, fathom;



fathom; and which perhaps we should have been apt to imagine inconsistent and impossible speculations, had not experience taught us, that things are really so, though we cannot possibly find out how they should be so.

Had the spirits of men been once unbodied, and had God revealed to them in that state of separation, that he designed them for another station in a lower world; and, in order to it, would clothe them with gross and sensible matter, and make them act continually in concert with fleshly organs, and with dependence upon them, no doubt but one of these forward reasoners would have concluded immediately, that the thing proposed was unphilosophical and absurd.—And therefore, that either the revelation did not really come from God, or that this could not be the sense of it.—For how could body and spirit, things so totally different, any way meet together and compose one entire subject? Or how could they, when thus met, have any possible influence on each other?

These therefore are immodest and unjustifiable ways of reasoning, which would persuade us to reject truths, on the account of some supposed impossibilities, of which it is manifestly impossible that we should have any clear and adequate conception. And therefore, in all such cases, it becomes not us to say, what can, or cannot be done, or what the nature of things will, or will not admit of. The short and only sure point, upon which controversies of this kind must turn, is, to see what God, in his holy word, has assured us concerning them.

As to the second part of the objection, that there were other ways of bringing about the  
pardon

pardon of sin, and the salvation of man; far be it from us to prescribe to God, or to say—that infinite goodness and wisdom itself could have found out no other expedient. But since this, and no other, was made use of by God, we must needs think it the most proper of any, and the best proportioned to those ends and purposes for which he designed it. And though it becomes us rather implicitly to adore the divine wisdom, than curiously to enquire into the reasons, and boldly to sound the depths of it; yet is there some light afforded us in Scripture, whereby we may discover a mighty fitness and congruity between the method that was used, and the end that was brought about by it.

Guiding ourselves therefore by the discoveries made to us on this head in holy writ, we may safely venture to say—It was fit and requisite, that our Redeemer should be God, that, by the infinite dignity of his person, the value of the sacrifice, which he made of himself in the flesh, might be so far enhanced, as to become a sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world: that the laws, which he should publish, might carry in them the utmost obligation and force: that his doctrine might have the highest authority: that we, being assured of his absolutely security from sin, might look up to his example, as to a perfect pattern of holiness; and in all things, without doubt or fear, implicitly follow his steps.

It was fit he should be God, that he might give an instance of infinite condescension and love toward us, and might from thence engage us to love and obey him also, without bounds: that he might be enabled in our behalf to van-  
quish



quish Satan, and all the powers of hell, and erect a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men, by triumphing first over all the strength, and cunning, and malice of our spiritual enemies.

It was highly expedient also, that he should be man, that our offences might be repaired in that nature which committed them: and *as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one man, many might be made righteous* \*.

That he might be qualified from thence, to be a *merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God* †, and a proper intercessor with him for man, whose infirmities he had tried, whose needs he had been sensible of; and, having *himself suffered and been tempted*, might be *able and willing to succour those that are tempted* ‡.

Lastly, That by appearing in human form, he might make a difference between the rigorous and astonishing dispensation of the law, and that milder one of grace: coming to us in the most familiar and winning way: instructing us in our duty like one of us: and proposing to us a lively and full example of what he taught, in what he did and suffered for us.

These are some of the accounts which God has hinted to us in Scripture, why his infinite wisdom was pleased to pitch upon this way, rather than any other, of reconciling man to himself. And yet, after all the accounts we can give ourselves of it, we cannot but confess it to be an abyss of mercy, which neither we nor angels are able to pry into; and which God alone,

\* Rom. v. 19.

† Heb. ii. 17.

‡ Ibid. 18.

alone, who contrived it, can fully explain and comprehend !

Let us forbear therefore to wade farther into the depth of this great myſtery of God *manifeſt in the fleſh* ; and let us ſatisfy ourſelves with believing it, as God has revealed it, without indulging our curioſity in an unprofitable ſearch after the reaſons, which induced God to order the ſtupendous work of our redemption in ſo inconceivable a manner : and let us proceed to draw from thence thoſe plain practical improvements, which may render it profitable unto godlineſs, and with which it will readily furniſh us.

And the firſt, and moſt natural uſe we are to make of it, is, to raiſe to ourſelves from thence matter of *thankfulneſs and ſpiritual joy*. *Behold, I bring you*, ſaid the angel to the ſhepherds, *good tidings of great joy which ſhall be to all people : for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord* \*. And theſe indeed are the beſt tidings that ever God ſent, or the world received : tidings of no leſs than freedom from the guilt and puniſhment of ſin ; of a way open to repentance, and the favour of God ; to peace of conſcience in this world, and everlaſting happineſs in the next.

Before the coming of Chriſt, all the account we could have of theſe things from the light of nature, went no farther than this :---That the breach of any of God's laws brought guilt along with it ; and that guilt made us liable to puniſhment. — Whether God, upon any conſiderations, would ever remit this puniſhment, was  
more

\* Luke ii. 10, 11.



more than mere reason could possibly tell us. For the justice of God certainly required, that sin should be followed with punishment: nor was this inconsistent with the goodness of God, which was otherwise sufficiently manifested to us. Under this kind of dark and uncomfortable reasonings were we left, till Christ *the Sun of Righteousness* arose with healing in his wings\*, and published the Gospel of repentance and remission of sins. All thanks and praise therefore be given to him, that our tongues can possibly express, or our hearts conceive! Abraham, at a mighty distance, and upon a very dim and imperfect view of it, *rejoiced to see this day*†: the angels, who themselves had no interest in this deliverance, yet were highly pleased with the prospect of those blessings it derived on their fellow-creature, man; and therefore sang that hymn on this occasion, which the Evangelist has recorded.—*Glory be to God on high, on earth peace, good-will toward men*‡. And shall not we, for whose sake this peace was sent on earth, and to whom all this good-will was meant, shall not we also *give glory to God on high, and rejoice before him with reverence*? Surely this is news, at which (as Isaiah prophesies of the miraculous effects that should take place in the kingdom of the Messiah) *the lame man should leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb should sing*§.

A second improvement that should be made of this doctrine, is, to raise our love to God from hence, to all the degrees of which it is capable.

For

\* Mal. iv. 2.  
§ Isa. xxxv. 6.

† John viii. 56.

‡ Luke ii. 14.

For love surely deserves returns of love ; and the highest instances of love, the highest returns of it. Now *in this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him* \*. Herein is love (as St. John continues his argument) *not that we loved God* (that is, loved God first, and, by that means, drew down his love upon us) *but that he loved us* (antecedently, freely) *and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

Had God sent the meanest attendant in the court of heaven, to publish abroad the good tidings of his free and voluntary pardon of sin, should we not have entertained it as a message of unspeakable love ! how much more, when he sends his Son, his only begotten Son, on this errand ! when he sends him to partake of our nature, and of all the infirmities, miseries, shame, and pain that attend it ; and at last to be made a sacrifice for our sins by the very hands of those men, for whose sake he left heaven ! This raises the motive so high, that our *lips are faint when we speak of it* ; and our heart melts away almost under the sense of that excessive burthen of love which lies upon us.

But how strangely is the force of this motive weakened by those who make Christ a *mere man*, not the eternal Son of God, sent out to us from the bosom of his father ! For at this rate the *love of God* toward us abates very much ; and then, I am afraid, *ours* toward him will proportionably abate with it. For the higher apprehensions we have of God's antecedent love to man, the stronger will our endeavours still be

\* 1 Joh. iv. 9, 10.



be to raise our affections up to a pitch some way suitable to those apprehensions.

So that, whether these men have, by this expedient, lessened the difficulties of their faith or not (which is matter of dispute) sure we are, that they have evidently lessened the argument for their love by it.

Another plain use we are to make of this doctrine is, to give us an *high sense of the dignity of our nature*, and an hearty displeasure at those sins which debase and dishonour it.

Behold now, as the Apostle to the Hebrews argues, is that prophecy of the Psalmist concerning *man* fulfilled in your ears.—*Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast set him over the works of thine hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet*\*; that is, the human nature, by its assumption to the divine, is now advanced far above principalities and powers, and every created being: nay, it is, in the person of Christ, become an object of adoration, even to spirits of the first rank and order. For, as the same Apostle interprets another passage of the Psalmist, *When God brought his first-begotten Son in the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him*†.

Should not such a reflection as this make us resolve to do nothing beneath that nature, which God has so highly honoured? Not to pollute it with vile affections and lusts: not to set it upon mean and unworthy pursuits, and on minding earthly things; but to have our conversation in heaven; *from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our*  
vile

\* Heb. ii. 7.

† Heb. i. 6.

*vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body \* ?*

A sense of birth and noble blood will often keep men from doing things beneath themselves, when no other motive can restrain them : and shall it not be sufficient to preserve us from every evil and defiling work, to consider our near alliance with God himself, by the intervention of the man *Christ Jesus* ? Surely such a consideration should engage us, after the most powerful manner, to *purify our natures, even as his is pure* ; and to *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit †*.

And as God's assuming our nature should make us reflect often on the dignity and worth of it, and resolve not to defile *that* with base and brutish enjoyments which Christ hath thus ennobled and sanctified ; so, on the other hand,

The *condescension* also of the Son of God, in this mysterious work of our redemption, should infuse into us a spirit of universal humility, since he, *who was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person ‡*, emptied himself willingly of all that glory, to become a vile and miserable creature for the salvation of men ; what a deep lowliness of mind ought we (in imitation of him) to carry about us, through the several stages of life, and the different administrations of Providence ? How willing should it make us to undertake any work, to be seen in any office, though ever so mean and low, that tends any way to the good and welfare of mankind ? It is the great Apostle's argument, *Let nothing be done, says he, through strife, or vain glory ; but in lowli-*

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\* Phil. iii. 19, 20, 21.

† 2 Cor. vii. 1.

‡ Heb. i. 3.



*ness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross\*.*

A fifth thing I would recommend to you, from considering the incarnation of Christ, is, that we would take care to trace all the steps of that example which he set us in the flesh; and which that he might set us, was one great end of his taking our nature upon him. And, oh! let not this end be frustrated, by our neglecting to look up to that admirable pattern of all virtue and holiness, in the life of the immaculate Jesus, which the four Gospels have afforded us! a life, as useful to be handed down to us in all its circumstances, as his very precepts themselves. For in that he exemplified his precepts, and gave an instance of the practicableness, the beauty, and the power of them. Such an instance, as charms the eyes, and engages the hearts, of all that behold it; and will, if well attended to, have the same influence upon us, that enjoying the immediate view of God, face to face, once had upon Moses: it will make us shine with part of that lustre we are looking upon, and transform us into some kind of resemblance with it. *We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord †, that is, viewing carefully the image of*  
our

\* Phil. ii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.      † 2 Cor. iii. 18.

our Lord's life, as it is drawn to us in the glass of the Evangelists, and studying to express it in ourselves, *we shall be changed* (as it follows) *into the same image from glory to glory*; from one degree of virtue and perfection to another, till at last *we arrive at the very measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*\*.

I shall mention but one improvement more of the doctrine of the day, and then conclude.— And that is, that we should take occasion from hence, highly to esteem and reverence the evangelical dispensation: to value and prize that everlasting Gospel, which Christ sealed to us with his blood, above all other books, religions, and philosophies; above all other methods of living and dying that have been ever taught or practised in the world.

Were there nothing contained in it but that one *faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*†: even that should recommend it more to us, and make us take greater delight in perusing it, than turning over all the volumes of wit and reason, all the discourses of moral virtue, all the treatises of arts and sciences, which the learned part of mankind among the Gentiles have afforded us: we should count them all but dross and dung, in comparison of the *excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus*‡.

But the best expression of our reverence toward this Gospel is, to comply with the terms of it. Let us remember, that the last scope of the whole *mystery of godliness*, is, to oblige mankind to be good and virtuous; and to lead lives answerable to such bright discoveries and

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motives,

\* Ephes. iv. 13.

† 1 Tim. i. 15.

‡ Phil. iii. 8.



motives, as Revelation has proposed to us. And therefore let me exhort and beseech every one of you this day, as ye would not (as far as in you lies) frustrate the design of our Saviour's birth; as ye would not baffle the truth of those prophecies concerning the innocence and purity of the lives of men under the reign of the Messiah; and as ye would not hereafter wish, that your Saviour had never been born, nor you yourselves neither; to be careful for your parts to answer the great end of his incarnation, and to live as becomes a people, that have been thus redeemed of the Lord.

*For how shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation? Amen.*



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## On St. Stephen's Day.

December 26.

By Dr. ADAM LITTLETON.

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ACTS, Chap. vii. Ver. 60.

*And he (Stephen) kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

**W**HEN we consider, as we ought to do at this festival of Christ's birth, the infinite condescensions of divine love, that God sent his Son clothed in our nature to do and to die for us, when the world was at enmity with him; there cannot be a more suitable subject for our meditation and practice, than, that as God loved us, so we should love one another, even those who have deserved worst at our hands.

And next to our Blessed Lord himself, there cannot be a more eminent example of this, than the protomartyr, who led the van in the noble army of martyrs, who prayed for his enemies.

For all his other virtues and characters, the bravery of his faith, the constancy of his mind, the greatness of his parts, the undauntedness and glories of his countenance, the learning and conviction of his discourse, the power and triumphs of his elocution, (which are themes,



may serve to make just subjects of meditation upon, severally by themselves) these are inconsiderable things in comparison of this charity of his; as St. Paul has determined it, that if a man *speak with the tongue of angels, and give his body to be burnt, or stoned, as he did, and have not charity, it all signifies nothing* \*.

Here we find him in his lowest posture, upon his knees, at the place of execution, with the stones flying thick about him, amidst his furious adversaries, expressing the same devotion in his prayers, as he had before learning and reason in his discourses; shewing no less humility and patience in his sufferings at the block, than he had courage and resolution in his defence at the bar: and alike practising piety to his Jesus, whom he saw standing at the right hand of God ready to assist and to receive him, and charity to his and his Jesus's enemies, who were now in defiance of the master stoning and pelting the servant to death.

*And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit; so the verse before the text.*

*And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And having said this, he fell asleep: so the text itself.*

Wherein let me recommend to your imitation a Christian virtue here implied, the love of our enemies; implied, did I say? I might have said expressed; for he expressed his love of them, in his praying for them; and in order to this I shall exemplify this love of enemies in St. Stephen's carriage and deportment, as it i  
hers

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 3.

here set down : that he *kneeled, and cried with a loud voice, and prayed for them.*

Now because instruction is more effectual by example, than by precepts, the one presenting lively to the sight, what the other informs the understanding by the duller sense of hearing; and seeing that virtues are with more ease and delight, and so with more persuasiveness learnt, when we see them acted, than when we only hear them discoursed : give me leave first to go over the draught and particulars of the example, and then by way of application lay before you some inducements for your imitation of him in the practice of this virtue.

The example is St. Stephen praying for his enemies : where we have to consider,

I. The posture in which he prays ; *he kneeled down.*

II. The manner of his delivery ; *he cried with a loud voice.*

III. The prayer itself which he used ; *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*

IV. The time of his making this prayer ; they were the very last words he spoke ; he died with this prayer in his mouth ; *and when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

I. *He kneeled down.* We shall take notice, that this posture of kneeling is in the general an instance of religious reverence in our humble addressees to God ; and in particular, as here in St. Stephen's case, of devout earnestness in the making our importunate requests to him.

1. First kneeling is a posture of reverence, and therefore hath by pious persons of all ages been looked upon, as fit to be used in our approaches to the heavenly majesty.



Thus David in his invitatory : *O come, let us worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our maker*\*; as though without these acts of adoration, *falling down and kneeling*, there could be no worship of God. *Let us worship*. How is that to be done? why; by *falling down, and kneeling before him*; by bowing the body, to shew the veneration and humility of our minds; and by the bending of the knees, to make out the inclinations and compliances of our wills.

It is therefore no less irrational than impious, for any one to do (as too many have in these late licentious times been taught to do) to come into places of worship without any regard of their postures, and to think their bare bodily appearance enough, how rude soever their behaviour may be.

For God, who made body as well as soul, expects and requires to be honoured and served with both; and the Second Commandment, which forbids us to apply the worship of our bodies to idols, must be so understood, as that it is not only lawful, but fit and necessary to give that worship to God, to which we alike stand obliged by that Commandment for the outward man, as in the first for the inward; they both running in the same negative strain, and each of them including an affirmative.

*O come then, and let us kneel before the Lord our maker*. This is the reason of our kneeling, it is *the Lord our maker*; the maker of the whole *compositum*, body and soul both; for *he made us, and not we ourselves*†.

Thus did Daniel in the Old Testament‡, Peter and Paul in the New§, and Christ himself

\* Psal. xcv. 6.

† Psal. c. 2.

‡ Dan. vi. 10.

§ Acts ix. 40. & xx. 36.

self in his humanity; they kneeled at their devotions \*. And what shall we say? Was it ever otherwise, when any thing like piety was practised in the world?

And now, if we wonder at some, who have laid aside the common civilities wont to be paid to men, have we not much more reason to wonder at others, who, contrary to all antiquity, religion, reason and sense, have taught people to throw off all outward decent regards to God himself; that when they come into places of public assemblies, they present themselves like Behemoth (that is, elephants) as if their maker had (according to an old vulgar error concerning that creature) given them no joints in their knees to perform their homage to him with.

This as to *reverence*; though that may even in prayer too, I confess, be expressed by other postures likewise upon occasions.

For so the *publican stood afar off*, and prayed †; and yet so he stood, as that he bowed his head instead of his knee, insomuch that he durst not look up: and possibly he might take it for too great a presumption for him, to make so familiar, though humble (as being the ordinary) address; and since children use to kneel to their parents, he chose to stand at distance like a servant before his master.

Nay, even here Stephen himself in the very foregoing verse, *stood and prayed, Lord Jesu receive my spirit*; for here it is first, that we find him kneeling, as if he had not been at prayers before.

And indeed is not that as much a confession of his faith in Christ, for which he was now to suffer;

\* Luke xxii. 41.

† Luke xviii. 13.



suffer; as a prayer, since it is directed to Jesus as Lord and God? and to confession, standing is as suitable, as kneeling is to prayer; or was it that he stood in compliance with his Lord's own posture, whom he saw *standing at God's right hand*?

But if so, why then does he not continue standing? why does he change his posture, and now fall on his knees?

2. His charity will give the best reason of that. He stood when he prayed for himself; but now he is to pray for others, to supplicate for his enemies forgiveness, to shew the ardent zeal and earnest desire he has for their souls good, *he kneels down*; as resolving not to leave his knees, till he obtain their pardon, and to make it his last request, and that which he will die with, that this sin of theirs in putting him to death, may not be reckoned to them so, as either to hinder their conversion here, or salvation hereafter.

Their sin humbled him more than his own suffering: nor did the stones so much wound his head, or bruise his body, as the guilt of those who flung them, then pierced his heart, and afflicted his soul: so that as if he had had a greater care of them, than he had of himself, having, as he stood, dispatched his own concerns, he falls low on his knees, in a posture of more importunate devotion, to negotiate the interests of his enemies.

Nor did this his earnestness want its success. One, we are sure of, there was, to whose charge this sin might have been laid, for he was *consenting to his death*\*; as being of the zealots faction,

\* Acts viii. 1.

faction, who were the managers of this execution; and yet, as it is thought by one of the fathers, was, for this very prayer of St. Stephen's, recovered, and by a miracle of mercy converted. *Si Stephanus non orasset, Paulum non habuisset ecclesia*; says he, "had not Stephen prayed, the church might still (for ought we know) have been without a Paul."

And it is not unlikely, but many others there might be, so that what one ingeniously remarks upon this passage, may have as much of truth in it, as it has of pious wit; that God was able *out of those stones*, which were thrown at Stephen (thanks to his prayer, which procured them that grace) *to raise up children unto Abraham*\*.

This is a way indeed of loving enemies, to bring them into the church, and thence to heaven; and by this means to make them God's friends, and our own for ever.

And now, blessed saint, though we may in part impute thy death to Saul †, who kept the witnesses clothes while they brained thee; yet to thy prayer it was, we owe much the life and labours of St. Paul; so that what was lost in thee to the church by this untimely death, was recovered and recompensed by his conversion, to which thy fervent prayer upon thy dying bended knees proved so happily instrumental.

But kneeling was not all; there is another circumstance to make out the earnestness of it.

II. *He cried with a loud voice*. It is a frequent expression the royal prophet makes use of; *I cried with my voice to God ‡*, that is, I was earnest in my prayers and intreaties, and he heard me.

Not

\* Matt. iii. 9.

† Acts vii. 58.

‡ Psal. lxxviii. 1.



Not that he, who understands the language of the heart, and knows our inmost conceptions, needs a vocal delivery for his own information; much less the advancing of the voice to make him hear: but where a pious heart is possessed with a sincere sense of its wants, there will be an affectionate fervent utterance of its desires; and this lifting up of the voice, as on our side it shews our total dependance upon divine aids for our relief in our distresses, and our earnest application to divine goodness; so on God's side it moves him to compassion, as the bowels of a tender hearted parent are touched with an intimate and earning sense of her crying child, to supply its wants, and to bemoan its griefs.

This is that is called wrestling with God in prayer, and laying fast hold on the Almighty, so as not to let him go without leaving a blessing behind him\*.

This the Son of God himself practised in his sufferings, importuning his heavenly Father *with strong cries* †, till he was heard in what he feared.

And if the Psalmist were heard, when he barely *cried with his voice* to the Lord; what assurance may we have, that our requests shall be accepted, and our prayer shall enter into his presence, if we cry to him *with a loud voice* ‡? when our pious affections burst forth like a boiling spring, and we pour out our souls before him, when our hearts are hot within us, and at length, through the ardency of spirit, the sacred fire breaks out from the altars of our bosoms,

\* Gen. xxxii. 24, compared with Hos. xii. 4. † Heb. v. 7.

‡ Psal. xxxix. 3.

bosoms, into flames and sparks that mount themselves heavenward; and we speak with our tongues the desires of our souls, and lift up heart and voice both to *the hills, from whence our help cometh*, even to *the rock of our salvation*.

It was not then out of any vain glorious ostentation, that St. Stephen *cried with a loud voice*; nor was it out of any hope he might possibly have, of convincing his enemies with the charity of his prayers, whom he could not prevail upon with the strength of his arguments; but it was out of that passionate compassionate concernment he had for their souls.

I know there have been some, who have affected the *loudness of voice*, and have made heaven and earth ring with their cries; when either they have prayed for blood and violence, or that, which they would have to be thought devotion, has been stuffed only with tedious impertinences, and nauseous repetitions, and wanted these artifices to put it off; and this has proceeded more from affectation or design, than affection, as being either *vox & præterea nihil*, but an empty voice and nothing else; or else like the loud cry of St. Stephen's persecutors.

For the zealots here in the context cried also *with a loud voice*\*; but that was in a desperate fury, when they *stopped their ears* withal, to shew their inexorable cruelty, that they were resolved not to hear a word more, that this stout champion, and now glorious sufferer should speak in his own or his master's behalf.

We see here, that furious blind zeal, and true Christian charity may use the same methods,  
and

\* Acts vii. 57.



and take the same course to a quite contrary end, and much different purpose.

The persecutors cry with a *loud voice*; but their cry was outrage and uproar, the result of a most direful malice.

The martyr cries with a *loud voice* too; but his cry is devotion and supplication, the effect of a genuine and high raised charity.

Their cry was a rude alarm for the wicked onset, to animate and exasperate their rage.

His cry was a powerful charm to invoke and implore their pardon from heaven.

He echoes back their shouts with kinder accents, and returns their cries so, as if possible to drown them in a gracious forgiveness.

Beside, he apprehended that the *voice of his blood* would cry aloud to heaven for vengeance; and therefore presents it with the cry of his prayers, which he sends aforehand to take sanctuary for his guilty murderers, before sentence should be given against them, or the *avenger of blood* should be sent out with *hue and cry* after them.

*Blessed martyr!* thus was thy gracious master treated before thee; they cried, *Away with him, crucify him, and let his blood be upon us, and upon our children*; and thus did he carry himself toward his adversaries; he cried, *Father forgive them, they know not what they do*\*; and thus thou, in imitation of him, answeredst the loud cries of the enraged multitude, and prevented the cries of thy innocent blood, which they were now actually spilling, with the louder cries of thy most earnest and importunate prayers for their forgiveness.

He

\* Luke xxiii. 34.

*He cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* That is the third thing.

III. The *prayer* itself; which, as to the manner of it, is short and ejaculatory; as to the matter, breathes all of it the highest and most cordial charity.

I. I know the humour of some pretending pious is not to fancy any prayers, but what are long-winded; they think therefore the church collects and responsals to be but narrow and scanty expressions of devotion, and censure them rather for interruptions than performances of prayer; whereas on the contrary, by these short petitionary returns, the understandings of people are much advantaged, and their affections highly quickened and inflamed in the frequent repetition of their assent; whilst that *tædium* and weariness, which usually accompanies duller length, is by this means fairly avoided.

This was our Saviour's own practice in his agony, and other instances; where he, who was himself the word, could not have wanted multitude of words, had he so thought fit to express the overflowing conceptions and affections of his divine soul; but was content to deliver himself in short and plain forms of words, and to reiterate them too upon occasion.

This was likewise his judgment, when being to prescribe a form of prayer for the use of his disciples, which was to be the very ground of liturgy, he adviseth us not to be like the Heathens, who imagined they should be heard for their much babbling\*.

Thus prayed the publican in a church-form, continued still almost *verbatim* in our Litany,  
*Lord*

\* Matt. vi. 7.



*Lord be merciful to me a sinner\**; and went home justified, rather than the Pharisee, who used a conceited (I mean a conceived) form of his own, and as broad perhaps as the phylacteries he wore.

Thus our St. Stephen to comprise *multa paucis*, much in a little, coucheth his matter close, and makes out in charity, what may seem wanting in length.

2. Now what greater charity is there, than that to the souls of men? and how can that charity be better and more nobly expressed, than by forgiving our enemies ourselves, and recommending them to God's forgiveness? He does, as it were, set God an example, pardoning them himself, and then desiring his pardon for them likewise.

He anticipates divine justice, and puts a stop to procedures against these malefactors in heaven, by shewing mercy to them in his own person here upon earth.

And whereas Christ hath taught us to pray in our own behalf, that God *would forgive us our offences, as we forgive them that offend us*; he in a seeming higher flight intreats pardon for his enemies at God's hands, implying they had it already at his.

*Lord lay not this sin to their charge*; as if he had said, Lord, thou knowest I love thee so entirely, and am so freely ready to suffer for thy sake, that I do not, will not, lay this sin of theirs in my intended murder to their charge, now while they are doing it; O do not thou ever lay it to their charge, after it is done!

Murder

\* Luke xviii. 13.

Murder, a heinous crying sin, and the charge of it proportionably dreadful. But what kind of murder this? The murder of an innocent and excellent person, of a minister of Christ, and that upon the account of his constancy to religion, and his faith in the holy Jesus.

This sin of theirs had many aggravating circumstances; as being committed not only against the rules of piety and known justice, but against the very laws of the country, and in affront to the government they then lived under.

It is true, the Jews had a custom, as Josephus tells us (an irregular custom though) for the rabble, without any further process, and that by the connivance of the Sanhedrim, to put to death some malefactors by stoning them; particularly in the case of idolatry, when any one was found bringing in false worships.

And from this allowance arose the sect or faction of the zealots; whose practice it was, without expecting sentence, to seize men guilty or not guilty, and hurry them to the place of execution, as they did St. Stephen here.

And the Romans themselves winked at this disorder, as long as the mischief of it lit only on some few among the Jews themselves, members of the Jewish nation.

But this humour of popular rage grew at last to that arbitrary exorbitance, that it proved one of the greatest fatal occasions of that people's final destruction, that one stone should not be left upon another.

This was our Saviour's complaint and commination; *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee.\**,

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&amp;c.

\* Luke xiii. 34.



&c. See the wild effects of an ill-governed zeal, which, amidst the greatest pretences of piety, so easily degenerates into outrageous passion, and mixes itself with corrupt interest.

And I know not how people are over willingly imposed on with these false shews of piety.

This was used to be done, not only with impunity, but with glory too; as if they did God the most meritorious service in the highest acts of impiety; as if superlative villanies were the surest test of a godly party.

But St. Stephen, however their zeal may transport them, as he takes up charity, so he does not let go his courage; so some Greek copies read his character in the sixth Chapter, (where we read, *full of faith and power*) *πληρὸς χάριτος καὶ δυνάμεως*, and so the vulgar has rendered it, *plenus gratiâ & fortitudine*, a man full of charity or grace, and of fortitude or courage too.

He fears not to call this barbarous, and by all laws unjustifiable act of theirs, sin; and in a manner charges them with it, when he prays God *not to lay it to their charge*.

Neither does their malicious fury (with which they had now surrounded him) nor the apprehension of an imminent cruel death, which by so many multiplied strokes assaults him on every side, daunt the greatness of his spirit, that he should not call it by its own name, as it was a sin; or disoblige his charity, that he should not pray for its forgiveness.

He bespeaks at once their conviction and their pardon; as knowing they were not likely to be forgiven, without some penitent acknowledgement.

This

This was the drift of his prayer, that God would not so punish their sin, as to deny them repentance. He prays for their pardon, and, in order to that, for their conversion.

It is a foolish unwarrantable charity, that complies with men in their sins; and as to God's enemies, and his church's, and our own too, we may and must hate their vices, while we wish well to their persons.

Upon this account we beseech God in our public Litanies, *to forgive our enemies, persecutors and slanderers, and to turn their hearts. To turn their hearts?* Whither, to us? No, that were in effect to pray for ourselves, but to turn them to himself; for when their hearts are turned once to God, he will, if he think fit, with ease turn them to us.

Gracious Lord, may I say, and may every one that hears me say; impute not to any enemy of mine, if any I have, or shall have, any sin or offence of his, that he hath committed, or shall commit against me; but deal so with him, as I hope thou wilt deal by me; pardon and forgive him, and turn his heart, and turn my heart to thee, that so both our hearts may be united and centered in thy love, and whatever sorry inconsiderable misunderstandings there have been, or may be betwixt us, yet having our affections ultimately terminated in thee, we may be filled with the fruits and blessings of divine charity.

And thus much for the *prayer* itself. The last thing to be spoken to, is

IV. The circumstance of time, when he made this prayer; at the very instant of his death, when the stones came thick about him, with

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threatening



threatening messages of it, and with sturdy bangs rang him a dying peal upon all parts of his body. And it should seem, the very next blow he received, did the work effectually; for so it is said, *and having said this, he fell asleep*. In this manner our dying Lord did before, who even at his last gasp prayed for his enemies.

Charity is in a Christian, what the heart is in a natural man; the first thing that lives, and the last that dies; and expires not while breath lasts, wherein it may vent itself by prayer.

It was bravely said, *Imperatorem decet stantem mori*, that a general should die standing: and it may as piously and as becomingly be said, *Christianum precantem*, that a Christian ought to die upon his knees. So our St. Stephen here did, whose courage kept him standing, when he profest his faith, and commended his spirit to his Jesus; and his charity put him on his knees, to pray for his enemies.

Brave champion, excellent Christian! who both standest in the defence of thy faith, and kneelest in the exercise of thy charity; as knowing both how to conquer, and to submit; to baffle thy enemies reason, and to forgive their malice.

This his pardon of his injurious murderers he makes his last will and testament, as I may say, and desires God to confirm it, by putting to his seal.

I know, some may take advantage from this, that, as many men love to put off good works till death, it may be time enough then to forgive our enemies, when we are upon our death beds, and ready to take leave of the world; and that it need not perhaps be done before.

But this is to misapply the example of St. Stephen, who dying under an actual injury, forgave it, and prayed for his enemies, while they were murdering him.

It is true at death, which convinces us of our own mortality, we should then at least lay down all animosities, and shew, that, as ourselves are mortal, so our passions and enmities are so too: but he that wilfully defers his forgiveness till then, is very far from a right bred charity, which Christ has appointed to be an every days exercise, having taught us in our daily prayer, to ask forgiveness of our trespasses at God's hands, upon no other terms, but *as we forgive them that trespass against us*.

We spoke before of the blessed returns of this prayer of his, as to some of his enemies; and sure the martyr himself did not go without his share in the gracious effects of his own charity. Upon the saying of these words, *he fell asleep*.

Mind the softness of the expression, as if he had died easy and unconcerned, though knocked in the head; and the stones, which were the instruments of his death, had been by miracle turned into down-pillows for sleep and ease.

Alas! had it been but a sleep, those repeated thumps would soon have wakened him to a fresh sense of his enemies persevering malice.

It is indeed an Hebraism, where the word, which signifies to go to bed, to lie down, *to fall asleep*, imports also, by metaphor, *to die*; but sure enough the word was here purposely made choice of.

For how can we imagine, it should with any propriety of speech be said, that a man, who



was stoned to death, fell asleep? unless there were somewhat more than ordinary in the thing; somewhat, I say, of more than usual support and comfort, through divine assistance, afforded to the person thus dying.

He that hath possessed his heart with St. Stephen's faith and charity, may die with the like ease on a rack, though beset with the most exquisite torments witty malice can invent.

Could a philosopher tell his insulting enemy, ἀποκτεῖναι δύνασαι, βλάψαι δ' οὐ *Kill me thou mayest, but hurt me thou canst not*: and can a Christian, whose spirit is built upon more advanced principles of honour, want resolution to encounter and trample upon the greatest indignities?

The stoutness of his faith, and the meekness of his charity, deadened the blows of his persecutors malice, or at least rendered him insensible; and at once defeating their attempts, and frustrating their designs, consecrated the dying martyr to a saintship, and the stones, which in officious throngs came about him, to become a chapel of ease, a κοιμήτηριον, a sleeping place: *he fell asleep*.

And thus have I gone over the historical passages, and treated of this Christian grace of loving our enemies *in hypothesis*, as it is here represented in St. Stephen's example. A word or two of it *in thesis*, and I have done.

There is no body, that owns himself Christian, but must acknowledge his obligations to the practice of this duty, of loving our enemies, how strange and difficult soever to flesh and blood it may appear.

Anax-

Anaxagoras, in his apology, challenges all the heathen world, in their philosophies, religions or laws, to shew such a precept. It is a thing doubtless above the pitch of common morality.

The Jews themselves, who were the peculiar people of God, either had it not, or had lost it, when our Saviour came into the world; who in his reformation of their laws, or at least their manners, takes particular notice of this defect. *Ye have heard it hath been said, saith he, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that persecute you, and do good to them that hate you* \*. This is the Christian law in downright positive terms.

I must confess, that in the book of Psalms, which has been the constant solemn formulary of devotions, both in the Jewish and the Christian church, there are several passages that seem to speak another language and temper, than that Christ here requires of us.

But we must know that David spoke as inspired, and knew who those enemies of God and his church were, whose obstinate malice had devoted them to destruction.

And thus was it with St. Paul, in the case of Hymenæus, and the coppersmith, and other schismatical Gospellers †, who opposed themselves to Apostolical authority, whom he accurses by name ‡.

We therefore, who cannot read those compositions with the same spirit wherewith David wrote them, I mean as to prophecy, are to take such passages for predictions of vengeance to

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befall

\* Matt. v. 43, 44. † 1 Tim. i. 20. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 14.



befall such enemies, rather than for imprecations of judgements upon them.

And further we are to understand them in this sense, that we may pray God to confound and destroy their wicked devices, at the same time when with the greatest zeal we pray for the conversion and salvation of their souls, since the doing of both is justified by the same charity, that a charity we owe to the church and the public, this a charity we are to pay to every individual person.

The duty then stands good; let me only lay before you some inducements, that may incite you to the practice of it, in imitation of blessed Stephen, and I shall be very brief.

I. First then, the love of enemies is a god-like quality.

*Be ye merciful, as your Father which is in heaven is merciful* \*, says one Evangelist. *Be ye perfect, as he is perfect* †, says another; intimating, that mercy is the divine perfection. And wherein does God so much demonstrate this mercy of his, as in loving his enemies? obliging the bad as well as good with his rain and sunshine in common providence, and offering his grace to those who many times refuse or neglect it.

For, alas! what can any the best of us all expect, much less demand as due, from the hands of a gracious God? who are unworthy of those benefits he daily showers down on us, before we receive them, and as unthankful for them, when we have them.

If then the Almighty God thus treats us, who are so conscious to ourselves of our evil deservings,

\* Luke vi. 36.

† Matt. v. 48.

ings, with such transcendent bounty; what are we poor weak creatures, that we should malign and envy one another, and upon, I know not what, pretence of injuries and discontents, keep ourselves at irreconcilable distance from our brethren?

Add to this, that when we consider the erroneousness of our judgments, and the perverseness of our wills, how apt we are to be mistaken in the apprehensions and measures we make of our brothers carriage; and withal, that the great God, whatever injuries we may receive\*, has reserved vengeance to himself as his prerogative, and the main character of his sovereignty; we cannot but be convinced, how dangerous it will be for us, to entertain rancour and malice, which will make us so unlike to God who made us, and to the Son of God who redeemed us. For,

2. Again, "this charity is that which must render us conformable to our blessed Lord and Master;" who came into the world upon the greatest design of love, when all mankind was in a state of enmity against God.

Thus the Apostle descants upon it, that for a righteous man one would scarcely die †; much less for miscreants, sinners, and enemies, as we were, which Christ did; who, at his very passion, not only prayed, but died for those very persons, who shed his precious blood. And agreeably to this it is said of some wicked heretics, that they denied the Lord who bought them ‡.

Now as all that our Saviour did or suffered for us was meritorious, so it was exemplary too; and if we mean to be the better for his merit,

\* Rom. xii. 19. † Rom. v. 7. ‡ 2 Pet. ii. 1.



merit, we must endeavour to follow his example.

Would we then be Christians indeed? We must, like our master, love our enemies, and do good to those from whom we receive evil; for else if we shew kindness only to those who are kind to us, what do we more, as himself says, than the very worst of heathens, and vilest of sinners do\*?

3. In the last place, not to mention the good use, we may make of enemies, if we be wise; which requires of us, upon the very square of justice, to thank God for them, and to pray for them too; since they are commonly *censores morum*, monitors and spies upon our actions, who will be sure, one way or other, to let us know of our faults: which office, though it proceed not from them out of love, yet is the highest point of friendship, since friendship itself cannot subsist without it; and yet is a thing, wherein friends generally fail, but enemies do seldom or never. For this is the surest rule and standard of love, as it is set down in Leviticus, *Thou shalt love thy brother, and shalt not suffer sin upon him.* †

To pass by this, because I would not hold you too long.

Beside the excellence of this grace, and the obligations which our Christianity hath laid upon us, the great and sure advantages, with which it is attended, are enough to recommend it to us; that at present it gains us the noble conquest over ourselves and our enemies both, and that for the future it procures us vast rewards.

What

\* Matt. v. 46.

† Lev. xix. 17.

What is there worthier of a man, or more grateful to him, if he rightly understand himself, than to be master and governor of his own mind, to have the command of his passions, to be a monarch at home, and to enjoy a perfect peace and undisturbed calm within his own breast? And this no way better to be obtained, than by the love of enemies, whereby all enmity, by which our rest may be disturbed, is taken out of the way.

It is indeed bestial and brutish, to be swayed by the sensual appetite, and to follow the swinge of concupiscence; but to be transported and carried away with passion is ferine, and no less than diabolical; hatred, envy, malice, ill-will, grudge and revenge, being both the sins and the torments of the damned spirits.

This peace at home, when once attained, will be accompanied with victory abroad. \*

Do good to thy enemy, and by that means thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head, says the Apostle. How? to destroy and consume him? No, but to melt him down. A metaphor taken from metals, which resist the hammer, and yield to the flames.

I know, there are some such unyielding, unrelenting natures, who have made it their resolve, *odisse quem læserint*, never to forgive a man whom they have misused; that, as if they were calcined and cindered, are, one would think, past the chemical operation of this divine glowing virtue; and yet I dare to affirm even of such, that, if this method be fairly applied, and duly followed, though they may not perhaps be won to be our friends, yet, if they have

\* Rom. xii. 20.



have any ingenuity, they will be ashamed to appear our enemies.

But then, when we make our prospect into the other world, where charity and love is the only business that is to employ those blessed ones; whereupon St. Paul, in the comparison of the three Christian graces, prefers charity \*, as that which will not only bring us to heaven, but accompany us in, leaving the other two behind her at the gate; for there will be no employment for faith or hope there, where all is vision, all fruition:—

I say, when we look forward, with what large interest will our scant forgivenesses be returned to us there? How will our charity, which taught us to cover the slight offences of our brethren†, cover a multitude of our own grievous sins? and what mutual indearments will there be betwixt those who were perhaps of distant affections on earth, (for pious persons many times disagree) whose prayers have reconciled them, and brought them together to heaven?

In a word: Have we a holy emulation to be like God? Would we be men of an excellent spirit? Have we regard to Christ his doctrine, or his example? Would we be Christians to the purpose? Would we be quiet and serene within, victorious and successful without? Would we improve our future glories, and add stars and diamonds to our celestial crowns? Would we, to take an instance from the text, fall asleep with ease, as St. Stephen here did, and rise up with joy at the general resurrection?

Let

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

† 1 Pet. iv. 8.

Let us pray in the church's words in this day's office, that God would fill us with his holy spirit, that by the example of his first martyr, who prayed for his murderers, we may learn to love and bless our persecutors, to embrace our enemies with a hearty kindness, and to requite injuries with our prayers and all good offices; that this our charity may help to bring both them and ourselves together into the kingdom of heaven. *Amen.*



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## On St. John the Evangelist's Day.

December 27th.

By the Reverend STRICKLAND GOUGH, M. A.

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JOHN, Chap. xiii. Ver. 23.

*Now there was leaning on Jesus's bosom, one of his disciples whom Jesus loved.*

THE Saviour of the world, who was before all ages in the bosom of the Father, selecting one of his disciples from the rest, as the distinguished object of his love, and to receive peculiar marks of favour, may excite a reasonable and praise-worthy curiosity, to know, both who, and what manner of man he was: especially as it may be presumed they had all of them proper dispositions and qualifications, on which account they were chosen to be disciples—For it cannot be supposed to be an instance of that capricious affection natural parents often shew to a favourite child; sometimes without any pretended reason, oft-times against reason; and, not unusually founded on infirmities, nay on follies, more deserving chastisement, than love. But our Saviour, who had the nicest knowledge of human nature, and “*knew perfectly what was in man,*” \* certainly saw some superior qualities, some very lovely dispositions, that gained his esteem, and induced

ed him to take one of his followers thus for his bosom-friend.

What those qualities and dispositions were, will be a very useful enquiry for us: who likewise profess ourselves to be the disciples and followers of the same master; to whose friendship and esteem we should have the highest ambition to aspire: and who, though we have not the honour of that personal converse with him here below, may however hope and expect to be distinguished by him at the general judgment, according to our dispositions and behaviour; and to have our seats in the kingdom of heaven nearer to him, according as we have excelled in the virtues of his religion.

And I am the rather inclined to enter into this subject, as a noble writer of our own country seems to have reflected on our holy religion, for "taking so little notice of some of the most "heroic virtues," as he calls them; among which he reckons that of private friendship.\*— But sure he was strangely partial not to mention the circumstance in the text, as well as the friendship of David and Jonathan, under the Jewish dispensation. The example of the founder of our religion pleads as strongly in its favour, as any precepts could have done: and to lay down injunctions for friendship, would be as unnecessary as to lay down rules about perception or feeling; it being so natural, that perhaps no generous breast was ever without it: nay, even

\* Private friendship, and zeal for the public and our country, are virtues purely voluntary in a Christian. They are no essential parts of his charity.

Lord Shaftsbury's Essay on the freedom of wit and humour. Vol. I. p. 98, 99. Sixth Edition.



even the vicious are often drawn into it by a similitude of their vices and follies. But from the example before us, we may collect the truest incitement to it; and those god-like dispositions on which, alone, a wise man will bestow it.

I shall therefore in the following discourse endeavour to shew

I. That the favourite disciple had such a lovely temper of mind, as was peculiarly recommended in the religion of his master. And from his writings shall shew

II. That he had thoroughly entered into the genius of his religion; imbibing those principles which give the greatest honour, and lustre, and beauty to it.

III. And I hope this will not be thought a useless enquiry, or a mere subject of speculation; since in the conclusion, I shall make such observations, and draw such inferences, as may be of use both for the instruction of our judgments and the conduct of our lives.

I. The circumstance mentioned in the text is referred to in the latter end of this Gospel, in such a manner as to shew that it was not mentioned in an accidental way; but as a circumstance well worthy of peculiar notice and regard: and that the person was St. John himself, the author of this Gospel\*; though, by a singular and very amiable modesty, he names not himself, but gives his readers to understand it, by circumlocution only, and description.

And this remarkable modesty of his was doubtless one of the reasons for which our Saviour loved him; no virtue being more interesting

\* 1 John xiii. 23, 24.

ing and engaging.—The very passage of which the text is a part, is a remarkable instance of it.

When our Saviour, at the paschal supper, *testified to his disciples that one of them should betray him*; though they were, doubtless, all very uneasy at it, *and looked one on another*, as we are told, *doubting of whom he spake*; yet this disciple, who then sat next to him, and, according to the custom of the country, *leaned on his bosom*, was too modest to question him about it, before he should think proper to explain himself; *till Peter*, who was of a much bolder and forwarder disposition, *becokned*, and made signs to him to do it.

As small as this circumstance may appear, it may in a great measure let us into the character of St. John, shewing him to have the disposition our Saviour has thought proper to make the subject of a particular precept to his disciples, when he put forth *a parable to them that were bidden, on his marking how they chose out the chief rooms*; on the contrary, exhorting his disciples to keep themselves backward, and *to go rather, and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that had them cometh, he might say unto them, friends go up higher, and so they might have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with them*\*. Our Saviour thought this humility so engaging, as to induce the master of the feast to treat them with particular distinction: not like those who estimate a modest man at the same rate as he estimates himself, and leave him in quiet possession of the low rank of his retirement. It is not so among the worthy and generous part of mankind.

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\* Luke xiv. 7, &c.



kind. With a noble simplicity, they judge of men by the standard only of their virtues and abilities, and regulate their behaviour toward them accordingly. Our Saviour, who exhorts his disciples *to learn of him, for he was meek and lowly of heart*\*, selects this meek and modest disciple to be nearest himself, and to *lean on his bosom*.

Thus likewise in the history of the Jews, we find that when God determined to select that people from the rest of the world, to answer the wise purposes of his providence, and his grace; he chooses Moses, the meekest of them all, to be their law-giver and their guide; and even compels him to it, notwithstanding all his excuses and diffidence of himself at mount Horeb.

This was the temper of this disciple, as we see it in the history of his life.

II. Let us now, in the second place, look into his writings. And we shall find universal love and charity, and meekness, and humility, the principal subjects of them: and it will be allowed that no kind of writing shews so much the character, and disposition, and heart of a man, as the epistolary kind, to which I shall confine myself. No wonder then our Saviour, whose principal precept was that of love, inso-much that he calls it a new commandment, *that he gave to his disciples to love one another*†, should have so great a regard to him for entering, as I have already said, so readily and thoroughly into the genius of his religion; and imbibing those principles that give the greatest honour, and beauty, and lustre to it.

The first epistle general of St. John is designed to recommend to mankind the imitation of the perfections of God, *who he tells us is light, and in whom is no darkness at all*\*.—From this representation of the universal Father of mankind, he inculcates the most instructive lessons of purity and virtue; it being impossible for those *who walk in darkness*, that is, in ignorance or vice, *to have fellowship with that light*†. An idea, which no mind is capable of, but what must itself be gloriously illuminated by the rays of that universal source of wisdom, and purity, and beneficence.

Nor is this an unintelligible piece of enthusiastical and rapturous devotion, conceived only in the mind, but not to be explained or communicated to another; nor yet a precept impracticable by creatures endued with the passions and appetites we are formed with: but exactly suited to our nature, whether we consider it as human, social, or spiritual. As if it were on purpose designed to obviate any objection against the disciples of our Saviour, as visionaries and enthusiasts. For he has reduced it to the most plain and obvious principles of universal social virtue; referring it, after the example of his Master, to that precept just mentioned, which he has made the characteristic of his disciples. His words are these: *A new commandment I write unto you, because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth*

I i 2

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\* 1 John i. 5.

† Ibid. ver. 6.



*eth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes*\*. Whoever will compare these sentiments with the precepts taught, and the principles inculcated by our Blessed Saviour in the Gospels, will find it impossible for any one to conform more exactly to the model there laid down.

A similitude of disposition and behaviour is the truest, perhaps the only foundation of friendship. From whence we might presume that St. John had thoroughly imbibed these principles, though we had no account of his life or writings—But as it is, we are not left to presumption alone, but we have demonstration before our eyes.

To mention every benevolent, as well as just, sentiment, would be to transcribe all his Epistles. What humanity and sweetness of disposition is there in the joy he expresses at finding *the children of the elect lady walking in the truth*†! what a generous and manly satisfaction in the hospitality and constancy of his well-beloved Gaius! what a noble commendation, sufficient to inspire him to persevere, in that beautiful compliment, *Beloved, I wish above all things, thou mayest prosper, and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth*‡! These sentiments will always captivate a delicate reader; and raise the same regard for the Apostle his Master had for him; and shew him to be indeed of the character which every virtuous man will always love.

But there is another passage relating to God, the adorable object of all religious worship, which I cannot help taking notice of; because  
by

\* 1 John ii. 8, &c. † 2 John ver. 4. ‡ 3 John ver. 2.

by it we shall not only entertain the most pure, and holy, and venerable notions of him already mentioned, *that he is light, and in him is no darkness at all*; but if I may so say, even familiarize him to us; for it tells us that he is not only lovely, but *love itself; God is love*\*. This removes the superstitious awe and dread which are apt to invade the minds of many, and quite bewilder them, when they contemplate his unsearchable perfections, and his ways that are past finding out.

His necessary existence, his eternity, his immensity, lose us in amazement and wonder: but love is an idea intimate with all, and of our acquaintance. We can be at no loss for gratitude, for the best return in our power, or for the exactest imitation; but it will at once inspire us with every principle, and every practice of religion: we shall need very little study and reasoning about it; but it will as it were overpower us with the love of God, and of our neighbour; *on which two commandments, our Saviour tells us, hang all the law, and the prophets*†; and the disciple argues in the same manner, *he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him*‡.

Such was the *disciple whom Jesus loved*.

And we find, he not only distinguished him with his most familiar friendship when living, taking him even to his bosom; but likewise in the agonies of death upon the cross, he gave him the highest mark of his good opinion and affection, bequeathing him to his own mother as a son; and giving him the honour to take care of her after his death. And he was not of

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\* 1 John iv. 8. † Matt. xxii. 40. ‡ 1 John iv. 16.



so niggardly a disposition as to think it a burdensome legacy; he had not a moment's hesitation about the trouble or the expence; but *from that hour that disciple took her to his own home* \*.

In this character then we may look upon him as in the place even of his Master himself. And what exalted ideas must we have of the man selected to supply the loss of so dear a son, so divine a comfort, so supreme a support! We cannot sure have so little regard to his memory, as not to enquire whether there are any other traces of his history.

Ecclesiastical writers then tell us, that he persevered in his attachment to the religion his Master came from heaven to instruct us in, through the most grievous persecutions under the emperor Domitian; and it is plain from the Scripture itself, that he was banished to the isle of Patmos † in the Ægean sea, where he wrote his Revelation. And the same ecclesiastical writers tell us, that he wrote his Epistles there too, which are so full of the generous sentiments, and which breathe the god-like disposition that has been mentioned. An additional circumstance in his favour; for persecution and hardship are apt to have a contrary effect, to discompose and sour the mind. But he bore his afflictions, not only with as much patience and constancy as any of the disciples, but longer too, out-living them all. He planted several churches in Asia, and many years exercised the apostolical office in that quarter of the world; residing chiefly at Ephesus, where he died in so infirm an old age that it is reported, his last  
sermons

\* John xix. 27.

† Rev. i. 9.

sermons were little more than a continued, and, to his auditors, well-known repetition of that single favourite precept of Christianity, *children, love one another.*

But I must not end my account of this disciple here; and imitate ordinary biographers, by disguising any part of his character; for notwithstanding all that has been said in praise of him, to account for our Saviour's peculiar regard to him, and for universal benefit and instruction; it must be acknowledged that he had his faults, and one of them so enormous, as drew from his Master one of the severest rebukes that ever proceeded out of his mouth.

For he was not only one of those disciples, who had ambitious hopes of preferment in a temporal kingdom, and contended with the rest *which of them should be greatest in it* \*: but was likewise one of the two who desired leave to *pray for fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans*: which filled our Blessed Lord with so much indignation, that, notwithstanding the motives that induced them to it, *he turned, and rebuked them, and said, ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.* †

I will just mention the circumstance, that we may see in what manner his zeal misled him; and for the sake of some useful lessons we may learn from it.

As our Saviour was returning from the mountain where he had been transfigured, in order to go to Jerusalem, the place of his approaching sufferings; it so happened that his nearest way was through a village of Samaria, into which *he sent messengers before him* to provide him ac-

I i 4

commoda-

\* Luke xxii. 24.

† Ibid. ix. 55.



accommodations. But the Samaritans, who dis-  
 sented from the Jews upon a dispute, whether  
 Jerusalem, or mount Gerizim were the place  
 where they should build a temple for the wor-  
 ship of God; finding our Saviour to be a Jew,  
 and going to Jerusalem, refused him the com-  
 mon accommodations of a traveller. This rude  
 and uncourteous treatment irritated St. John and  
 his brother James, so far as to make the cruel  
 request that has been mentioned. They thought  
 nothing could be so provoking as to refuse their  
 Master, who came from heaven on the kindest  
 errand God Almighty had ever sent to mankind.  
 In the heighth of their zeal for their Master's ho-  
 nour, they recollected the example of a prophet  
 inspired by God, who twice prayed for fire from  
 heaven, to consume a band sent by the king of  
 the same country where they were, to take him.  
 They thought there was a difference between  
 their Master, and any prophet; and that the in-  
 terposition of heaven, granting Elijah's prayer,  
 sanctified the request, putting the propriety,  
 nay religion, of it beyond dispute—And yet  
 notwithstanding all these seeming pious motives,  
 our Saviour *turned and rebuked them*. The spi-  
 rit of persecution was in his judgment the wick-  
 edest of all spirits: and though Elijah's prayer  
 was granted; and *the fire came from heaven,*  
*and consumed* his adversaries; vindicating the  
 honour of the Most High God, so shamefully  
 insulted by the idolatry of their king, whose  
 commands they were fulfilling: yet the same  
 spirit did not become the proselytes of his reli-  
 gion, who came from heaven *not to destroy men's*  
*lives but to save them*\*: and this violence of  
 temper

\* Luke ix. 56.

temper appeared the worse, in a disciple of so mild, so meek, so generous a disposition; and who so well knew the better genius of his Master's religion.

It would be too great an excursion from my subject, to explain the full meaning of our Saviour's rebuke; which was not of their ignorance, but of their vice; however, it will be very proper for us all to consider, in our own minds, the flagrancy of this crime, in any shape, or any degree, that could extort so severe a censure of so beloved a friend; and who had not offended from an habitual disposition, but from a sudden excursion of zeal. And likewise it should teach us to be very cautious of following the examples even of persons inspired by God, in any thing of this kind; their examples being no rule to us, because what they did, they did *in the name of the Lord*; that is, by his immediate direction, to answer the wise ends of his government. A province which no one has the least right to intermeddle in, unbidden, and of his own accord.

III. I proceed to make such observations, and draw such inferences from what has been said, as may be of use both for the instruction of our judgments, and the conduct of our lives.

And the first observation shall be, upon what has been last said, of the faults of St. John.

From this we may learn to make proper allowances for the weakness of human nature. We find our Saviour, notwithstanding these faults of St. John, did not withdraw his friendship from him: he rebuked him, 'tis true; but he still continued to love him. Contrary to this, we often meet in common life with persons  
who



who break with a favourite friend, or disinherit a darling child, for a single fault; and yet they themselves are persons of great frailty and infirmity! But this is not after the example of the Blessed Jesus, *who knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* \* And yet notwithstanding his own purity and innocence, and the high commission he bore from his Father, which would give him the best title to exercise severity, he has left us the mildest precepts; and set us the noblest example of forgiveness and charity.

Let us universally learn the same temper, despising, as well as avoiding, the pitiful, censorious, suspicious disposition that mixes so much with the conversation of the vain, the illiterate, and the frail.

But principally let us learn to admire the same qualities in others, and cultivate them in ourselves, that gained the love, and esteem, and friendship, of the Saviour of the world. The way to be loved, is to be lovely: and it is not the external beauty of the human form, improved by all the additional ornaments of fancy and contrivance that will gain the affection of the mind. No, nor yet the superior qualities of wisdom, or learning, or power: the softer and gentler dispositions of meekness, and modesty, good-will and generosity set even these off. And certainly there must be something extremely engaging in these qualities, that could draw our Lord into such a particular affection to this amiable disciple. The Apostles were all of them chosen to be so, not by an arbitrary election, but because they were the fittest, and properest, for the employment: but fit and proper as they  
all

\* 1 Peter ii. 22.

all were, we find the Master had a favourite, and may therefore be very sure, they had not all of them equally the same qualities, because he whom God hath appointed to be the judge of all the earth, could not but do right.

To enter into a comparison of St. John's character with that of the rest of the disciples, would be invidious, as well as now too tedious: but we have seen both what his sentiments and disposition were. Nor yet did he want those qualifications, which the world are apt to think superior, of wisdom and knowledge. But these are qualities that, however they may beget the esteem and veneration of others, are by no means apt to attract their love: nor could they possibly attract that of him who is wisdom itself, and in comparison with whom, *the wisest of mortal men may be said to be but of yesterday, and to know nothing.*

Let us, after the example of our Blessed Lord and Master, love and value the same gentle dispositions. Let not our friendships be capricious and arbitrary, but founded on the same principles: and let us endeavour, by the same qualities, to gain the friendship and esteem of mankind. They alone will recommend us to the valuable part of them; nor will they in general fail to do it.

But whatever be the caprice of mankind, this we may be assured of, that they will infallibly recommend us to the love of Jesus, who, though ascended to the bosom of the Father, knows our dispositions, and will love, and reward, us accordingly. The same purity, modesty, and humility of mind; the same just, and venerable, and amiable, notions of Almighty

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ty God; the same benevolent and friendly instructions; the same sympathy and compassion; the same firmness, and resolution, and constancy, will always appear to him in the same light; and raise us to the most exalted places in the kingdom of glory; to the seats nearest himself.

Let the hope and prospect hereof be always uppermost in our minds. And sure nothing can possibly excite us to the practice of virtue, if the love of Jesus will not inspire us! if the favour of the universal Father of mankind will not engage us! And let us not only aspire to this honour ourselves; but let us do every thing in our power to excite a generous emulation of the same spirit in others. After the example of the beloved disciple, let us *have no greater joy than that they walk in the truth*; and pray that universal virtue may flourish, ennobling the whole human race; shedding its kindly influences on them here; and giving us the transporting prospect of an universal meeting above; that not only we ourselves, but all, may be partakers of the happiness of those whom *Jesus loveth*.

## On the Holy Innocents Day.

December 28.

By the Reverend W. G. BARNES, M. A.

St. MATTH. Chap. ii. Ver. 16.

*Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.*

THESE words contain in them an historical narration of that most inhuman massacre, which gave rise to the first institution of the present festival. And therefore, that my discourse upon them may be the more immediately accommodated to the solemnity thereof, I shall without farther introduction proceed in the following method.

I. I will shew you what these wise men were, by whom Herod apprehended himself to be mocked, and how imitable an example they have set before us in not answering Herod's expectation of their return to him.

II. I shall reflect on the extreme barbarity and inhumanity of Herod's undertaking, withal  
remark-



remarking the future events, which it is credibly reported to have produced as to himself.

III. I Shall represent some of the manifold happineſſes, which theſe murdered innocents were and are partakers of, by means of this ſavage cruelty, however baſe, villainous and ill-intended it was in itſelf: concluding the whole,

IV, and laſtly, with ſome ſuitable deductions of univerſal concern to us all.

I. I will ſhew you what theſe wiſemen were, by whom Herod apprehended himſelf to be mocked, and how imitable an example they have ſet before us in not anſwering Herod's expectation of their return to him.

In order whereunto, though there have been many very nice and critical in their inquiries of what country they were inhabitants; ſome aſſerting them to have been Arabians, others Chaldeans, others Perſians, and others, inhabitants of the utmoſt parts of the Eaſt; yet, I ſhall at preſent wave the diſquiſition of that controverſy, becauſe of the great uncertainties and obſcurities attending it, and confine myſelf to that account concerning them, which I find to be more certain and indiſputable; and that is this: it is agreed on all hands, that they were very learned men, well acquainted with the liberal ſciences, and more particularly aſtronomy: and as to their quality, it is as little queſtioned but that they were men of fortune and command, honour and renown. But that which adds the greateſt luſtre and reputation to their memory is, that they were virtuous and religious men; men who demonſtrated the reality of their fear of God, by yielding a ready obedience to his will, as it was revealed to them. For no ſooner had God illuminated

minated their understandings, so far as to give them rational and sufficient grounds of believing, that now the time for the incarnation of Christ was fully accomplished, and that they might have the honour of yielding their early acknowledgements to him, if they would but follow the guidance of that heavenly convoy, which was miraculously placed in the firmament for a light unto them, but presently they prepared themselves to act in pursuance of the reasons of that illumination. And though their journey was like to be very long and very dangerous; long, because of the distance of place between that where they dwelt, and that where the royal babe was born; and dangerous, as well in respect of the many casualties to which they were liable upon the way, as of the wrath of Herod, to which they rendered themselves obnoxious upon their approach to Jerusalem; yet, as if these considerations had been of no weight and moment at all, they slighted them, being fully fixed and resolved to prostrate themselves in all humble adoration to the great Saviour of mankind, that so they might personally magnify his goodness, acknowledge his power, and implore his divine favour and assistance. But this is not all; for it is yet more remarkable of them, and more immediately to our present design, that though upon their first approach to Jerusalem, they were so complaisant as to pay Herod a visit, and though he obliged them, upon the dispatch of the business which they came about, to return and acquaint him where they had found the young child, insinuating as if he had a design, upon such notice given, *to come and worship him also*; yet being warned of God in a dream, that  
they



they should not return to him, they departed into their own country another way: thereby evidently demonstrating to all the world, that they were not to be seduced, by false measures of honour and mistaken civility, to the violation of their duty toward God. An example truly generous and noble, and worthy the imitation of all who would approve themselves men and Christians indeed! for though it be confessedly an indispensable duty to render to all their dues, yet for a man to have persons so far in respect and admiration as to neglect the necessary obligations, which are antecedently owing to the Almighty, bespeaks a very base and abject temper of mind, pitifully mean and sordid. Which great truth, if it had been but well considered and rightly improved, there could not have been so sensible a decay of Christian piety in the world as is now too sadly observable; for, indeed, one great instrumental cause of that decay is this, that men, upon the suggestions of some temporary interest, have usually been forward in resigning up their powers and faculties to the governance of those from whom they expect to reap benefit, not daring, even for the sake of God, or his Christ, to do any thing which they believe displeasing to them. Whereas, had they been well principled in the absurdity and unreasonableness of engaging themselves in this sort of slavery, had they learned with the wise men to make God the ultimate object of their hopes and fears, and to place the injunctions of all human persons in subserviency and subordination to his; religion must needs have flourished much better than it hath done, and the professors thereof would never have been

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ensnared

ensnared and decoyed into many of those vile and ridiculous practices, which are now become a scandal and reproach even to humanity itself. And thus have I dispatched the first general proposed, and come now, in the

IId place, to reflect on the extreme barbarity and inhumanity of Herod's undertaking; withal remarking the future events, which it is credibly reported to have produced as to himself.

And here it will be convenient to observe, that this Herod, for distinction sake, commonly called Herodes Ascalonita, was a person of a mean extract and education, according to the account which Eusebius gives of him. But, however, having by good fortune ingratiated himself with Augustus and the Roman Senate, he obtained of them so far as to be deputed by them King of the Jews. In which dignity being instated, it was one of the most unwelcome accounts which could be brought to him, that there was a *young child born king of the Jews*; for he could not brook the thoughts of having a rival, and much less of his being in danger of deposition from the regal station. And therefore, in order to the gratification of his ambitious desires, that the cause of his jealousy might be removed, and his throne established securely to him; rather than fail of putting an end to the life of that young pretender, he gives orders to his missionary dragoons not to spare the lives of any children which they found in Bethlehem, or the coast thereof; from two years old and under, even not excepting (as some say) an infant-son of his own, which he had by a wife of the line of David! For Baronius tells us out of Philo, that



his own son made up the number of the murdered innocents, and gave occasion to that sarcastical expression of Augustus, which afterward became proverbial: "It is better to be Herod's hog than his son \*;" because (as some add) the Jews killed not their hogs as he did his son. But whether this story concerning his son be true or not (for I know there are some † who will have him to be murdered at another time, and upon another occasion) yet, surely, no good man can think upon the murder of the other innocents (which are by some ‡ said to have been no fewer than fourteen thousand) without extreme abhorrence and detestation, both of the action, and person authorizing it. For what rational apology can be made use of so much as to extenuate the guilt of so bloody a cruelty, arbitrarily undertaken, only to serve an ambitious temper of mind? Indeed, if it be just and warrantable to measure the quality and nature of mens crimes by the subsequent temporal misfortunes, which attend the authors of them, as in some cases it is, we shall have reason to conclude the crime of Herod to have been great, almost beyond a parallel. For the misfortunes, which, soon after the slaughter of these infants, seized him, are by Josephus reported to have been so numerous, and withal so very prodigious for their kind, as that they almost surpass belief. For not to mention the great infatuation of mind, which he afterward lay under, or the villainous act of cruelty, which he afterward committed upon another § of his sons, a little before his expiration; it

\* Melius est Herodis porcum esse quam filium. † Vid. Prid. Connect. 8vo Edit. Vol. 4. p. 923. Vid. Casaubon. Exercit. con. Baron. Sect. 16. pag. 173. ‡ Vid. Each. Eccles. Hist. § Antipater.

it will be more than sufficient to remember you of the strange agonies and tortures, which he must needs be supposed to endure, when he lay scorched with a burning fever, a furious itch at the same time invading his skin, and that accompanied with strange ulcers in his bowels, a vermiculation in his muscles, and frequent convulsions in his whole body: and all this beyond the relief of baths and medicines, and all the outward and inward applications of all the physicians that were to be met with. So that at length, after he had been racked and tormented with this complication of noisome and dolorous distempers, *he went unto his own place*, to the general joy and triumph even of his own relations. This is the substance of what is more largely related of him by Josephus, a Jewish writer, and therefore one who cannot justly be deemed partial to the Christian cause. And if this be true in fact (as we have all imaginable reason to believe it to be) then, surely, Herod got nothing in the end by his political projects to secure himself in the kingdom. From whence it is obvious farther to conclude, seeing tyranny and cruelty proved of such ill consequence to him, that it is much more prudent and safe for persons in authority to exercise the trust reposed in them by the measures of justice and equity: for otherwise, if they transgress those measures, he that so exemplarily punished Herod, can punish them in like manner, and he will be sure sooner or later to make them sensible, that *he that is higher than the highest, regardeth, and there be higher than they\**. But now, if from

K k 2

the

\* Eccles. v. 8.



the contemplation of Herod's baseness and punishment, we proceed to view, in the

III<sup>d</sup> place, the murdered innocents, we shall certainly find that by means of that savage cruelty committed upon them, however base, villainous and ill-intended it was in itself, yet they were and are partakers of manifold happinesses; the chiefest of which I reckon may consist in the three following instances.

1. In that they were thereby rescued and delivered from the troubles and miseries of this world, which would proportionably have increased upon them, as their days had increased.

2. In that their memories are thereby rendered famous and illustrious in the Christian church, which honoureth them with an everlasting remembrance, that is never likely to be cut off. But,

3. And that more chiefly and especially, in that they thereby became the more intimately dear and precious in the sight of God, as dying not only in, but for, the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. In that they were thereby rescued and delivered from the troubles and miseries of this world, which would proportionably have increased upon them, as their days had increased. For though life indeed be sweet, and nature as well as religion obligeth us to endeavour the prolongation of it as far as we can; yet, to as many as are possessed of the innocence and purity of the infants in the text, *the day of death is better than the day of their birth*\*; better, not only as it is introductory to the glories and triumphs of a future state, but simply and absolutely, as it puts a period to the miseries and unhappinesses

\* Eccles. vii. 1.

happineſſes of this. For, indeed, there is no ſtation of life whatſoever, in which there are not divers intermixtures of uneaſineſs and diſquiet, and it is not in the power of any man to carve out ſuch a fortune or condition to himſelf, as in all reſpects to be called truly happy. If our lot is fallen unto us in fair grounds, and the heritages which we have are goodly and large; if our titles are numerous and ſwelling, and require a great company of attendants upon us; though this may ſometimes gratify our pride, and feed the vanity of ambition in us; yet, what between the diſtractions of public and private buſineſs, the inward fears of waſting thoſe fortunes, or falling into diſgrace, and the inceſſant moleſtations which foreign envy is always producing, it is ſeldom ſeen that true content or ſatisfaction are to be met with in ſuch high places, they being proportionably the more troubleſome and dangerous.

Again. If our outward portion of the things of this life be mean and ſcanty; ſo far from abounding with ſuperfluities, as to be ſcarce commensurate to our neceſſities; if our expences are great, our incomes ſmall, and we are frequently alarmed with the craving complaints, not only of our own appetites, but with the more vexatious ones of a large family; it is then very difficult and hard to fleſh and blood to abſtain from murmuring and repining againſt the great diſpenſer of all things: by which means alone, if there be no other either ſinful or penal conſequences, we are too apt to prepare bitter potions for ourſelves, and to render life itſelf a plague and burden. Nay, ſuppoſe that we are placed in a middle ſtation, which is indeed the



best, safest and most desirable : suppose that God hath been so bountiful to us, as to grant us Agur's wish, *neither poverty nor riches, but feeding us with food convenient* ; yet still, by sad experience we find, that there is something, either within or without us, ever and anon disturbing and annoying us, and we have too great cause with the preacher to say of the world and all that is therein, *It is vanity and vexation of spirit*. But,

2. Another instance of happiness, which the murdered innocents are partakers of, by means of that savage cruelty, consists in this, that their memories are thereby rendered famous and illustrious in the Christian church, which honoureth them with an everlasting remembrance, that is never likely to be cut off. And this, indeed, is an happiness, as in itself very extraordinary, so likewise very agreeable to the appetites and inclinations of human nature. *A good name is better than precious ointment* ; not only in reality more valuable, but beside that, more desirable in the common vogue and estimate of mankind. For however backward men generally are in their endeavours to do well, yet they are forward enough in their desires to hear well ; and, indeed, they must needs lay great force and violence upon their natures, who are not sensible of secret longings and thirstings after applause, and that not only while they breathe, but after their bodies are consumed into ashes. And hence it was, that many among the antient heathens were encouraged to such gallant and heroical exploits, as are now upon record ; the great principle upon which they acted, being the expectation of an immortal fame, of being registered

registered among the worthies and heroes, and celebrated for such in succeeding ages. Nay, so far hath the desire of transmitting their names down to posterity transported some persons, as that rather than fail of receiving a character in the annals of time wherein they lived, they have industriously set themselves upon the invention of exquisite and uncommon villainies, chusing rather to become famous for their infamy, than not to be famous at all\*. Which I mention, not as if I thought they did well in courting such a kind of reputation, but in order to exemplify to you, how desirous the very worst of men are of reputation in general, as well as the best. And if so, then happy, surely, thrice happy, these infants, who have that natural desire thus incomparably fulfilled, their names having been above seventeen hundred years sweet and fragrant in the nostrils of all good men, and a festival having been very early instituted in honour of them, as being the first martyrs who bore testimony to the Lamb, not by disputing, but dying†. Yet they are not so happy in this, as,

3. That by means of that savage cruelty committed upon them, they were rendered the more intimately dear and precious in the sight of God, as dying not only in, but for the Lord. For what probable cause can there be for so much as questioning, whether their souls were thereupon translated to a state of eternal bliss and

K k 4 glory?

\* Vid. the Rev. Mr. Gilbert Burnet's most excellent sermon, and more acute remark on this subject, preached at Chelmsford assizes, 1745. Vol. I. pag. 281, &c. Printed, 1747, by C. Ackers, in St. John's-Street. † Non loquendo, sed moriendo.



glory? If they had indeed been more advanced in age, and immersed themselves in the cares of the world, we could not have so boldly pronounced concerning them; for though the cause for which they died, would still have been equally good and honourable, yet it is possible that they might have lost their innocence, and if they had done so, the plea of their dying for the sake of Christ would have been but of small avail before God. For what St. Paul says of charity, *If he gave his body to be burned and had not charity, it would profit him nothing\**, is in like manner true of other graces and virtues. If men, who are persecuted even unto death, because they are professors of Christianity, are destitute of the graces and virtues which the rules of Christianity exact of them, they have no real title and interest in the love and favour of God. But now, as to these infants, the case is plain, that they were not in a capacity of incurring the displeasure of Almighty God, as not being then in a capacity of doing any evil; and therefore, having been *baptized in Christ by death*, there is no scruple to be made but that they are already, as to their souls, glorified; and moreover, as to their bodies, shall be partakers with Christ of a glorious resurrection. And was it not then an happy exchange for them thus to be freed from the miseries of this evil world, and immediately to be instated in the possession of an everlasting inheritance in a better? If Rachel had well known this, there would not so loud a voice have been heard in Rama, *so much weeping, lamentation and great mourning; she would not have refused comfort, saying, that her children*

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 3,

*dren were not : for though, indeed, they were not so, as to continue alive in her sight, yet it was much better for them ; and therefore she might have suppressed her tears, those lamentable outrages of nature, and remembered the command of God to her, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears ; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord ; and thy children shall come again from the land of the enemy\*, from the dark regions of death and the grave, to the pleasant and delightful paradise of God.*

IV. And now that I may conclude the whole with some suitable deductions of universal concern to us all ; from what has been said,

I. We may learn practically to animadvert upon and admire the over-ruling power of God, who is able, by reason of his mighty hand and outstretched arm, to produce great good out of evil. For thus we see he hath actually done in the case of the blessed innocents ; and, if we, for our parts, will but take care to love and fear him as we ought, he hath engaged his never failing promise, that he will deal in like manner by us. *We know, saith the Apostle, that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose ; and, if we be indeed such, who or what shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Christ that loved us †.*

It is true, indeed, that none of these things are in themselves joyous, but grievous ; they are in their natures apt to produce pains and agonies in

\* Jer. xiii. 16.

† Rom. viii. 28, &c.



in our bodies, and ungrateful resentments in our minds. But yet to a good man, those pains will be allayed, and those resentments restrained, when he considers, that God delights not to grieve him arbitrarily and without cause, but only in order to his greater benefit and advantage. For let the afflictions which befall him be, for their quality and degree, as heavy and severe as they can be; nay, let one calamity closely follow another, without any remarkable intermission; yet, still there are (at least) many spiritual uses and improvements to be made of them, to promote the interest of this better part; and he must be very thoughtless and inconsiderate, if, in the final issue of things, he cannot truly and thankfully say with holy David, *It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I might learn thy statutes.*

2. From what has been said, we may likewise be induced to consider, what great need we all have to endeavour after the innocence and purity of children; so far as it is attainable by persons of riper years, that so we may be the better prepared for all the changes and chances of this mortal life. For it is plain, that our lives are not in our own hands, and that we are not our own keepers. We see these infants were nipped in their buds, and cut off, some of them, almost as soon as they began to breathe. And though (God be praised!) we have no cause to dread the ruins and devastations of such a massacre among us, yet, there are ten thousand other things which may be instrumental to our dissolution, before we have so much as time to think of our approaching danger. We need not go far to seek for instances of persons, who have this minute, to all appearance, been in perfect vi-

gour and safety, and yet the very next minute turned into senseless carcasses; for all places and times have notoriously abounded with such: and therefore, what wise man can reasonably think himself absolutely secure from being made a like example unto others? And are we not then in common policy obliged to take such care of ourselves and our eternal concerns, as that we may always be provided against the worst? It is certain, that we can do ourselves no harm by making such an early provision for ourselves; for it is never too early to be virtuous; and the sooner we set about it, the greater we may justly hope will our pleasure and reward be. But it is possible, on the other hand, that we may do ourselves infinite harm by delaying such a provision; for what if, before we have actually compleated it, our great Lord should come? How wretched and miserable will our circumstances then be? What uninterrupted occasions will then be administered to us, of wishing that we had never been born? Think, if you can with pleasure, and think again upon the parable of the foolish virgins, who then went to *buy* oil for their lamps, when they should have *trimmed* them\*. But,

3, and lastly. From what has been said, when we have once taken care to cleanse and purge our consciences from evil works, and by that means to make our peace with God, we may observe with what comfort and freedom of spirit we may resign up ourselves into the hands of God, to be disposed of according to the good pleasure of his will. For then, come what will, come what can, we may rest satisfied, that all will be safe and secure on our side. Death itself, you see, to these innocents, because they were

\* St. Matt. xxv.



were innocents, proved infinitely more happy and desirable than life. And so it will always be, especially to such who die as those children did with purity of soul, and for the sake of Christ. Nay, indeed, however formidable and ghastly death upon that account may seem, when it appears with its deformed visage; yet, if we would but be persuaded to look upon it with the eye of faith, we should rejoice, as many of the primitive martyrs did, to meet with any lawful occasion of rushing into its embraces. For certainly, a crown of martyrdom is no such slight and ordinary thing, but that we may well think it a much more than sufficient compensation for all the transient pains usually antecedent to it. This, I am sure, we are bound to believe, if we believe any thing of the Gospel: and therefore, when I see men making themselves really miserable, for fear of I know not what imaginary miseries, which they fancy are coming upon them; when I observe them dolefully lamenting their unhappy state, I cannot but conclude, that there is a great defect of real religion in them. But whatever opinions some men may entertain, this I am persuaded in, that it is in itself much more preferable to die a thousand unnatural deaths to preserve a good conscience, than to commit the least sin in order to prevent one of them: and I heartily pray, that no one present may ever become such an infidel, as to disbelieve the truth of the promise which our Saviour hath made, with which I shall conclude, *Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it\**.

Now, &c.

\* St. Mark viii. 35.



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